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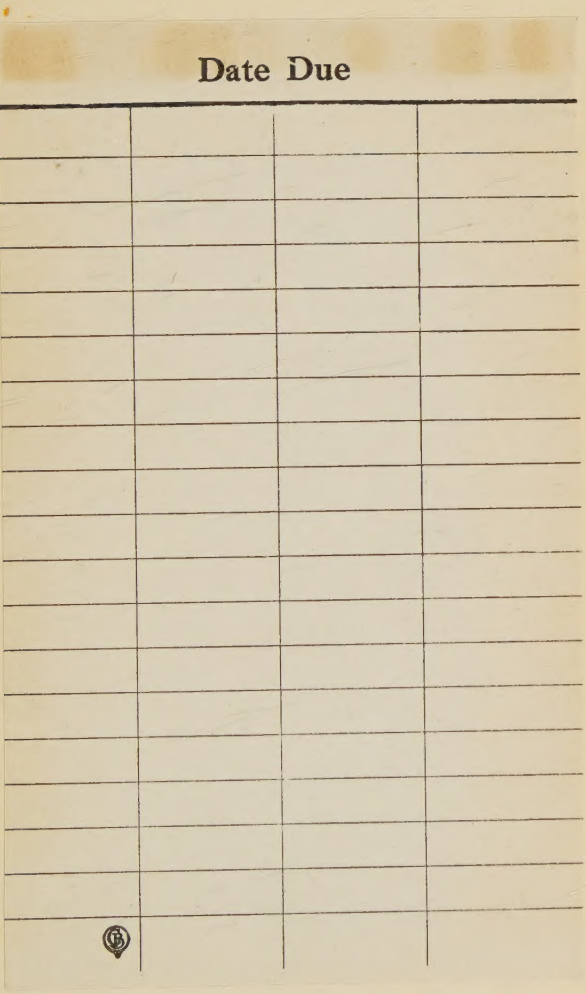

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THE

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

on the

New Testament

Edited by

W. Robertson Nicoll
M.A., LL.D.

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W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, LL.D., D.D.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

By

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

CHAPTER I

THE first striking term which I observe in this eloquent letter is in chapter i. 22, 23—"the Church, which is His body." We have lived so much downwards and backwards that we need to be reminded what the Apostle meant when he used the two words "the Church." Is it magnifying unduly the ignorance of a country in which Bible-reading is well-nigh obsolete to suggest that not one man in ten could say definitively and with the authority of Holy Scripture what the expression "the Church" means? Such ignorance would stupefy and dishearten the most zealous and optimistic teacher of religion. Christians themselves so rarely know what is meant by the designation "the Church"—so great that it needs no defining epithet. We have hung all manner of false jewellery upon the neck of this darling of

God: we, who abhor idolatry, are amongst the greatest idolators of all. Roman Church, Anglican Church, Nonconformist Church | all manner of little patchy, discrediting, and unworthy adjectives have we attached to the great word Church. Yea, and there be those who would say, if you uttered that word simply, "To what church do you refer?" Why, there is only one Church. God makes no reference to any other church. It is the Church which Christ purchased with His own blood. That Church He declares to be His incarnation, His body, His visibleness; and we, having nothing to do—idle dogs!—have invented adjectives and terms of limitation which we have attached to the word Church. What higher, nobler definition could be found than that which the Apostle himself supplies—the body of Christ, the new incarnation, the multifold personality? But we thought the Church was an institution. Only in a very limited sense is that true. It is Christ—His own very self. Do not go to the worst instances you can find of personal Church-membership so-called, and ask, in bantering and satiric

tones, whether such instances are to be regarded as the body of Christ. That is unjust criticism; that is unpardonable ignorance: it is not a standard to which you would like to submit your own character. This is not a question of instances of infirmity, mutilation, incompleteness, and the like. There is a nerve running through the whole conception symbolised by the word Church, which lifts it into a new definition and a complete and permanent influence. Are we to be taken in our very lowest moods, and to be judged when we are hardly men, so borne down by infirmity, so swallowed up of sorrow, so given away to evil passion, envy, jealousy, malice, and all uncharitableness? And when we are at that zero would it be right for even the devil to say, "These indicate what a miserable and worthless creature you are"? It is not so that God judges. He takes us at our best and highest and sweetest, and interprets us by the poetry and the music of love into the body of Christ. Sometimes ideality is taken as the ultimate fact; not what we are, but what we are meant to be,

and what we will be by the grace and love of God and the energy of His Spirit, must be regarded as the fact if we would be just to the kingdom of God.

Think, therefore, of the Church as the continued Christ. Do not look wildly round and ask where the Christ of nineteen centuries is; do not say, "Lo, He will come in this form or in that form, from this place or from that place." The apostolic conception authorises us to say that Jesus Christ is here, and is made visible in His Church, and that He regards the Church not in its actual or transitory condition, but in its idealistic meaning, its final completeness, its heavenly music. We know that at present it is in many respects a poor Church; but God sees something within the poverty, and beyond the poverty; and, recognising that something, Jesus Christ is already satisfied with the travail of His soul. Blessed be God for the telescope! the great spiritual instrument that enables us to see through the clouds and beyond the stars to the finished heavens where the morning star burns for ever.

A beautiful word we also find in chapter ii.

5—the word "grace." "By grace ye are saved"; "the riches of his grace" (verse 7). What does "grace" mean? Is it too much to say that not one man in fifty really knows the meaning of the word "grace," except in some narrow and superficial dictionary sense? The word "grace" is the Gospel in one syllable; the word "grace"—beautiful as a dewdrop, perfect as a star—holds within it all God's eternity, all God's redeeming purpose. If we could explain the word "grace" we should drive off much irreligion and recover much lost ground, and establish in confidence many a weary and divided mind. I know the word is a Bible word; that is not enough. We are sure the word "grace" can be found in the New Testament; that is far from enough—in fact, that amounts to next to nothing. The word "grace" is not only to be found in the Holy Book; it is to be found in human life, in human intercourse, in the family, in the market-place—everywhere. It is grace that triumphs over law. How far could this be explained to the slowest and darkest mind? If it could be explained, the explanation would be a revelation. We must not keep

within theological limitations if we are to explain such a word, so that the most plebeian mind can catch the light of its fire; we must go into common places, into the resorts of men, and even into the household life of the people. Would God they could see it! "By grace ye are saved"; not by law, not by works, but by pure favour, love, condescension, pity, and divine help. But how can it be made clear to the people who do not want to have it clarified—to the English heathen? Let me suppose that you have forfeited the confidence of an employer, a father, a friend, a state. You do not deny the forfeiture of the confidence. You reply, "I am unable to make any such denial; I have done the things I ought not to have done." Have you broken the commandments? Yes. Have you been dishonest? I have. Do you wish to be restored? I do. Will law ever restore you? Never; law has done with me, the law has condemned me, the law has marked me with its black stigma—black as the soot of hell. Then what is to be done? I have no idea what is to be done; I know that I have done the things that I ought not

to have done, there is no health in me; I dare not open the Book of the law, it would be like opening a great furnace door and letting the scorching fire out upon my very face. The thing to be done is this: as your pastor, teacher, or friend, I will go with you, and we will see the employer or friend whose confidence you have forfeited. That is the only way. We go to him and say, "Wrong has been done to you, a grievous wrong; we have no defence, we have no explanation, but the offender is broken-hearted about it—he falls down before you and begs you to forgive him and restore him; he has no defence; we say that again and again with the utmost emphasis and clearness; I have come with him to say this for him, for he is so choked with grief he can hardly say it for himself"; now let me say to you, "Be Godlike, and on the basis of the man's repentance forgive him—on the basis of his broken-hearted penitence give him another chance. What is your answer? Never has man so grand an opportunity as when he has an opportunity of forgiving some other man on the basis of penitence." And the

employer or friend feels the pathos of the occasion, acknowledges that there is no appeal to the law—the law is cast iron, absolutely inflexible—and says, "On that ground I cannot look at this offender; but if he is broken-hearted and penitent, who am I that I should stand out against him? One day I may have need of forgiveness myself; in the name of God I forgive thee, and ask thee to re-establish thyself by faithful service." What brought about that conclusion? Law? Never: law could not do it. What, then, brought it about? Grace, free grace, nothing but grace. That is the Gospel case so far as some poor human parallel can dimly indicate it. That is the position in which we stand to the law. The law cannot accommodate itself; the law cannot feel; the law has no compassionate heart. The law is definite, distinct, inflexible, final. But there is a higher power; there is grace, there is pity, there is condescending love. And so it is with the Gospel of Christ; and we shall one day come back to the sweet, sweet old hymn, "Free grace and dying love." That is the Gospel; other gospel there is none

that is effective to the salvation of the soul. What wonder, therefore, that the Apostle Paul seemed to make a special jewel of the word "grace," and to wear it as the crown star on his grateful heart?

A wonderful expression occurs in chapter ii. 7—"that in the ages to come." What a grip of things these men had! They are not occupied with frivolous subjects, with current topics, with the anecdote of the day; they see far, they have insight as well as foresight, and they measure the divine movement by ages as well as by moments. This is the only true measurement of the conception of the kingdom of heaven. This is the only conception of a nation's development and progress; not what it is at one particular moment or under one special set of circumstances, but what it is in its diameter, in its circumference, in the accretions and traditions of a thousand years. Jesus Christ, therefore, is in a sense waiting; He is looking for the restoration of things, and working towards it. We must not interrupt divine processes; a semicolon is not a fullstop; the literature of God is written

by the hand of God, and He must punctuate His own poetry. Let us, therefore, not be impatient, and thus show our ignorance. Do not let us rush in with explanations, and thus show our imperfectness and immaturity of mind. This Gospel belongs to ages—ages past, ages to come; stretching from the unbeginning beginning to the endless end.

What a beautiful expression is in chapter ii. 16—"reconcile." What does "reconcile" mean? Bringing things that were at variance into union; bringing voices that were out of tune into perfect accord; bringing hearts that were mutually hostile into a common understanding. How can this reconciliation—accepting it as a Bible word—be brought about? Only by grace. Reconciliations that are based on compromise are very temporary conveniences—there is nothing in them. It is not enough to say, "Let it be dropped, let the quarrel cease, say nothing more about the enmity." You have not extinguished the enmity when you have given it an opiate and plunged it into a narcotic sleep. Reconciliation must be

fundamental; it must go through and through the very heart, tissue, and substance of things; and it is by Christ that we have received the reconciliation.

A wondrous word is in chapter iii. 3—"revelation." We now call it "discovery." In the old, old time men called it "revelation." When the old prophets saw the inner meaning of things they said, "Thus saith the Lord"; and that is as true in geometry as it is in theology. Do not let us be atheistic in mathematics, and partially pious when we are singing hymns. If you can establish as an axiom any mathematical truth you would be perfectly justified in saying, "Thus saith the Lord." You could call it "a discovery," and give no social offence; or you could call it "a revelation," and be set down as a fanatic. Choose your own word. The Apostle Paul never scrupled to use the word "revelation." It implies that God trained his vision to bear a certain light; it therefore implies that a certain light was granted to the Apostle at a definite time, and it also promises to the whole redeemed Church of Christ continual growth in the knowledge

of Christ as well as in His grace. We ought not to be shocked when we hear that a man of prayer—of deepest, highest, truest faith—has had a revelation from God. Why should it be thought a thing incredible indeed that God should speak to those who sleep on the soft bosom of His love? If we had greater expectations we should have greater realisations; we have only lost the revelation because we have lost the child-heart.

Notice how wonderfully the Apostle keeps almost throughout the whole epistle to the house idea—to the family conception. Hence we have such words as "household," "the whole family in heaven and in earth"—husbands, wives, parents, children, servants. This Gospel goes through the whole house, omitting not a single chamber, creating a right atmosphere, and bringing all things into a harmony too deep for explanation, too grand for verbal discussion. You cannot be hanging little mottoes round the house to teach one another how good you ought to be to somebody else. This can only be done—this great mystery of reconciliation—by all being rooted in Christ, by all

drawing the living water from the same living fountain; and then there will be no need of explanations and concessions and compromises, and sighings about what I have to bear and what I have to endure. If you talk so, join the atheists; we do not want you at the table of the Lord. They who are really in Christ Jesus do not arrange a household life of compromise; they fall into each other's arms and hearts and ways by a mysterious, by a divine sympathy and trust.

The Apostle has a special word in chapter vi. 9—"Neither is there respect of persons with Him"; that is, with God or Christ, or, as He is called in the text, "the Master." But there must be respect of persons with God. But he says there is no respect of persons with God. Neither is there. But how can these statements both be right? Easily. What does the word "person" mean here? Have you traced the meaning of the word "person" through the New Testament Greek? Have you the shadow of an idea as to what "person" means in this particular relation? The word "person" is a

common word in the New Testament. God loves some persons. Yes. Therefore He does not love some other persons. Quite right. But it is said He is no respecter of persons. Perfectly so. The word "person" is a peculiar word in Paul and in James, and perhaps in other places. *Persona*, as we should say in modern times—a *persona grata*. My lord, what is that? Next to nothing. What then does "person" mean in this particular text? Mask. The Lord is no respecter of masks. There is a personality of mere estate, fortune, position, environment; the Lord cares nothing for such persons. There is a personality of soul, character, mind, the inner selfhood; there God distinguishes between the right and the wrong, between the good and the bad, between those who know Him and those who know Him not. We are living in an outside age, we have enlarged the shop window; and the Lord cares nothing for your masks, vizors, shells; He wants to know about the kernel, the soul, the character; that is the man. Outside selves soon fall away. It is with nations as it is with men. When the individual man becomes a

mere mask there will be found nothing in him at the last. When a nation becomes a mere mask it will lose all its battles, and I am glad of it. When a nation gives up its Bible-reading it gives up its soldiering as well. You cannot have soldiers where the national discipline is neglected or imperfect; your soldiers will be no better than your nations. Of course, now and again we shall all be delighted because a few soldiers have got on the top of a little hill; that ascent of a cock to a barren dunghill will be telegraphed all over, and will amount to nothing. It would be amusing, if it were not tragical and heartrending, to see how greatly excited we are because somebody has got to the top of the stairs and found nobody else on the landing. When the nation loses its Bible, it loses its fighting power. You cannot reject God, and be good fighters. People who are Bible-reading and psalm-singing will pound the atheistic nation to dust. They will be laughed at as snuffling, fanatical Cromwells; but Cromwell did not lose much. When you lose God you lose your generals. When you have scorned the

marriage bond, and marry for convenience, for social purposes of a minor nature—when the sacred household altar is turned into a mere stool of penitence—the nation has gone down. When the highest parts of any capital —its most wealthy, educated, and supposedly refined parts, sections, and neighbourhoods— have gone down in moral character; when in the middle of such society there is nothing but a bed of lust; the nation has gone down, and all its battles will end in smoke, disappointment, and disorder. Families and nations are only finally kept together by discipline, by love of work, by service, by early rising, by self-denial, by trust in God, by sevenfold daily prayer. You can try the other policy if you will, and God will find His vindication in the history of His own world. Men cannot lose religion without losing a great deal more. No man can give up Bible-reading and all that Bible-reading implies and necessitates without robbing somebody, or dishonouring somebody, or falsifying some sacred trust. You cannot take the keystone out of the bridge and leave the bridge as strong as it was before. And now some

fanatical idlers have proposed that we should have a day of humiliation and prayer. No! We do not want a day of humiliation and prayer; we want a life of humiliation and prayer. This is not an opportunity for occasional piety, for the fasting that eats more than ever, for the humiliation that loses nothing of its pride. These are occasions for life-long fasting, penance, discipline, companionship with Christ, and identification with the spirit of the Cross.

CHAPTER II

I WOULD like to read to you in the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Would you like to hear the reading? We must stop now and then to modernise and apply the deep, sweet meaning.

The Apostle Paul is not always just the same. He is consistent, but never monotonous. He is a sevenfold man; his epistles are his truest photograph. Have you ever read the epistles in the light of that suggestion?—not only to find out what the epistles are, but what their author was. He never wearies us, because he has a great gift of escaping monotony. He is rugged, incoherent, sometimes almost verbally self-contradictory; he is full of parentheses, he makes great use of bracketings and asides and

literary diversions, yet all the while there is a wholeness which eyes that love him can perfectly discern. In some epistles he is argumentative, almost contentious; he is pushing a point upon the attention of his correspondents, and he wants to establish a plea. He is not so enjoyable in such epistles. He sometimes elicits pity for the other man. He is heroic in his logic and destructive in his conclusions; then I sometimes prefer to turn over a page. To the Colossians, the Ephesians, he is as it were in another sense more vividly and tenderly and approachably the Apostle of the grace of God. In the Galatians he talks to the Galatians; in the Corinthians he talks to the Corinthians; they have their local disputes and matters to adjust and to determine. But to the Ephesians and the Colossians he speaks universals, he reveals solar systems; his strides are constellations; they are infinitely wondrous in intellectual conception, in imaginative and ideal colour and emphasis—catholic epistles in very deed; addressed to one church, but meant for all men and all ages.

We need such epistles many a time in traversing the hills and the dales of life. There are times when we are impatient with special messages to special people, with letters of explanation and contention; we want something more—we feel as if we could receive all the sunshine and breathe all the air and accommodate all the sparkling, flashing fountains of living water. When we are in such spiritual mood, we find all we want in the great father-mother-brother-sister letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. It would be the soul's fortune in the sterling gold of heaven if our memories could charge themselves with all the philosophy, theology, and poetry of the two epistles to the Colossians and to the Ephesians. They are great banqueting-tables; if we change the figure, they are great highland scenes with wondrous panoramas of light and colour and mystery and consolation. There are, I repeat, times when we need every word of them—times when we need the whole Godhead; for we are poor, alone, sad, and lost, and God Himself is hardly enough to satisfy the creature He has created. Who knows the epistles

to the Ephesians and the Colossians? He who knows them has bread to eat that the world knows not of. Yet these very epistles, so deep in their theology, so wide in their outlook, so piercing in their appeals, are full of ethical teaching and moral reminiscence and penetrating rebuke. Paul preached a full-orbed Gospel; he went around the entire circle of divine thought in so far as it is revealed to human imagination.

Take the first verse as an example:

> "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

That verse is theology in one sentence: you need no more. As we found in Gen. i. 1 all the Bible, so we find in Eph. ii. 1 the whole scheme of God and the whole revelation of human history. You—dead, quickened; you—alive, brought from the dead. There are moral resurrections as well as physical. How we boggle over some poor little miracle in bodily resurrection, and forget the infinitely grander and greater miracle of spiritual resurrection—the awakening

of the soul, the calling back of strange thoughts, whispering into the ear of moral death, blowing some silver trumpet over the grave of conscience, and awakening conscience to newness of life. But it is the trick of man to worry himself over the lowest points of things, to make a great stir about minor quantities and subsidiary agencies and applications; it is the nature of the creature when he is left to himself. He is greatly excited about the coming again of a poor body that is not worth while bringing back from the dust, but he passes over in silence the bringing back of a dead soul, the quickening of an inspired conscience, the reconstruction of a moral temple: that he cares not for. He says, "With what body will the dead come?" Poor worrying creature! always wasting himself at the wrong points and waiting midnight after midnight at the wrong door. If God has quickened man, He will see to all the rest. Recall our lessons upon words that teach by implication. We have seen that created means provided; that provided means redeemed; that redeemed means ultimate

sanctification and perfectness of manhood. So with the word "quickened"; it carries all the other evolution along with it; the oak is in the acorn.

> Verse 2: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

There is the world for you in one gloomy sentence. This is Paul's reading of moral history. Paul was no fancy lecturer; Paul did not write out a course of dreams and call them a course of lectures: Paul recognised that the air is full of the devil. The devil has hardly left room for the summer in all that air which he breathes and poisons. He would edge out the summer if he could; he tempts the spring; he says to that sweet young thing, the vernal spirit, Blight, O blossoms! Arise, O East Wind, and kill the buds! choke those little birds in their homely nest! It is the devil. Do not attempt to argue him out of existence. Some people try to argue him into existence; they have a devil on paper and in

the middle of a sealed creed which they feel themselves to be at liberty to take into the Court of Chancery to have the deed grammatically interpreted by a man who is learned in the analysis of letters. But the Apostle Paul assumed the devil, revealed him, declared him, took him into account, lectured upon him, defied him, sometimes was rebuffed by him—"Satan hath hindered us." There is probably no way of getting the idea so thoroughly into our dense minds as by representing the air, the whole atmosphere, as in some mysterious and inexplicable sense the sphere of the devil's ministry. You can for yourselves see what difficulty the sun has with the atmosphere, the fog, the rain, the east wind, the sea tormented, the crops blighted, the fields naked when they should be clothed with verdure. All this is but for a time. Never undervalue the enemy; never underestimate his resources; take it for granted that, whether you are fighting spiritually or physically, you have a great enemy to meet, and prepare yourselves accordingly, or you will lose the battle, and you will deserve to lose it.

Verse 3: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

That is not modern talk. We have schooled ourselves by false schooling out of these great, solemn, bedrock verities. The Apostle never would have suffered for our poor superficial theories; the Apostle would not have endured suffering and gloried in tribulation because he had received into his fancy some cobweb theory of creation, its evolution and its destiny. Not for such things did men preach in sorrow and seal in blood. If we have little conceptions about man and God, we shall have a little crumbling church, always at war with itself, and always losing the sham fights which it challenges and invites. Marvellous master was Paul! What deftness! what magnanimity! what wondrous subtlety of persuasiveness! "We all had our conversation." This is no pedantic priest coming with ferrule or rod to scourge some minor generation of men; this is a brother soul, this is a kindred experience: I know it, I have suffered

it, I recall the darkness, I remember the mercy. It is preaching of Paul's kind that will reconstruct the Church. The Church of Christ does not need reform. We have chosen that little milk-and-water word, and we carry it about with us as a kind of evening-party trick or toy. We say, This or That must be reformed. Jesus Christ never said so; He did not like diluted terms; He never spake a pale hesitant language into which you could thrust a thousand qualifying parentheses. He said, Repent! ye must be born again: make the tree good; do not paint the branches—hew down to the root and get the poison out. We do not want a reformed Church: we want a regenerated Church, a reconstructed Church, a Church of the Holy Ghost; not a framework, scaffolding, or apparatus of our own hired ecclesiastical imagination; we want a regenerated Church, every fibre, every filament made pure, made chaste with the sanctity of God. Beware of these little church-jobbers who are going about reforming any institution. When an institution needs reforming it needs destroying, that destruction may precede reconstruction; and

that sense of inadequacy or unfaithfulness may lead to a cry for the baptism of regeneration.

> Verses 4–6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

"Us," "us," always "us"—a priest who invokes a benediction upon himself as well as his people. That is brotherhood, that is holy masonry. "God, who is rich in mercy"—not rich in thunderbolts only, not rich in lightnings and tempests and great whirlwinds. Mercy is the greater part of Him: if we could but see it, His wrath is sometimes an aspect of His mercy; He slays the sinner that He may save him; He strips me naked that He may clothe me with a finer linen; He tears my nest to pieces that He may show me how to find a larger and warmer in some tree I had never thought of. "Rich in mercy," so that we may go to Him at all times, and we see Him most when we cannot see Him at all because

of the burning tears of our unquenchable grief. Put God's mercy to the test; He can bear a greater pressure still; lean hard, harder, hardest, again; you cannot fatigue Omnipotence. It was "when we were dead in sins" that God showed the richness of His mercy. It was not when we were partly recovering ourselves; it was actually when we were dead in sins, and, being dead, helpless, lost; it was then that the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. God makes us now sit in heavenly places—that is, in the heavenlies, in the world above the world, in the unseen kingdom. We trust the naked eye, and therefore miss the grand astronomy. We call our eyes of the body instruments of vision: whereas they are only instruments of deception or misinterpretation. True seeing is of the soul. Every son of man is in heaven while he is on the earth. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church. They who go about with a made candle lighted by a made match will sometimes come into passages where the swirling wind will blow the lighted tallow out. What

then? Live in the eternal, live in the heavenlies; have a throne spiritual, a crown imperishable, beauteously called "a crown of life." O man, why be but a little higher than the brutes when thou mightest be but a little lower than the angels?

> Verses 7, 8: "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Salvation is not by intellect, knowledge—because then heaven would be full, if full at all, of grammarians. I question whether any grammarian can enter the kingdom of heaven. I am now speaking of him in his purely pedantic relationship. He must be more than a grammarian: a grammarian he may be, and a great grammarian, and a grammarian of whom his fellows are justly proud; but in relation to the kingdom of heaven he must be something other, greater, wiser—he must have a faculty within a faculty that can see Jesus Christ as a little child might see Him. If salvation were not as the Apostle has placed it here, it would be

an intellectual feat, perhaps sometimes degrading itself into an intellectual trick. But it is of grace—"by grace are ye saved through faith." The world never invented these two great words; the world does not understand either of them. "Grace," "faith"—that is a foreign tongue. It is! it is heaven's tongue; it is the tongue of the Infinite Love. Grace means favour, pleasure, kindness, pure simple love, appreciation; it is a gift, not a bargain; it has no equivalent; the number stands alone, and the sign of equal-to never follows it. It is above algebra, above grammar.

Verse 9: "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

That is the very point. There must be no boasting; we must simply stand out and say, It is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy hath He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." We have nothing to do with our own making. We have nothing to do with our physical birth; we have nothing to do

with our superior or spiritual birth. For the next verse says :

> Verse 10 : "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Into what beautiful English might this be rendered ! Instead of saying "workmanship" speak the word that is almost Greek in its very form—"we are God's poems." God is the Poet—we are the poems ; He makes us now in this measure, now in that measure ; now sublime, now more friendly and approachable, but always pregnant with thought and love and music and mercy. Our souls, like our bodies, are all dissimilar, yet each soul is the poem of God. How so, Master—how so ? Through Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus, by the power of Jesus : the mystery of the Cross. Man, if thou knowest not these things in thy soul, and only through some worm-eaten book of man's writing, thou canst not discuss this high theme, thou art not in this great encounter with evil. Thou art an outsider, ill-fed, ill-nourished, self-exiled. Come in, and learn the language of the house, the home !

Verse 11: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands."

Paul is now in the midst of one of his characteristically tumultuous sentences. He will come out of it all right; we must give him time. Observe how urgent he is that people should get a full view of things; how specially anxious he always is that students of the Christian revelation should not be occupied by isolated phases and aspects, but should get a whole view of Christ's purpose in addressing Himself to man's condition. Hence the Apostle says, "Wherefore remember"; do not let yesterday escape without record, or the long yesterday of the heathenish state, but recall it, interrogate it, consider exactly what it is and what is its relation to your present condition and to the total idea of the kingdom of God! Do not let us think in detached days; do not let us break up the great calendar of life into the little calendar which is called a diary. History is a unity; individual history is an integrity, complete in itself in a certain well-understood sense.

"Wherefore remember": bring yesterday to help to-day; bring yourselves as you were a quarter of a century ago to interpret your present sacrament of eating and drinking; keep yourselves well together, focus the mind, do not be led away by an anecdote, but be instructed and illumined by a philosophy. There is a right remembrance, and there is a memory which is tormenting, and which Jesus Christ gives us no permission to cherish. We must therefore distinguish between these acts of memory. We may so remember the past as to be consolidated in our faith and greatly cheered in our Christian progress and spiritual development; or we may be so affected by the past as to be utterly depressed and disheartened, and be led to say, by some seductive spirit, that it is no use trying any more, for, batter on the kingdom of heaven as we may, there is a door through which our appeal cannot be heard. That is a degraded memory; that is a false and mischievous remembrance. The great memory of the past is this, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." You are not to stop by the little muddled pool of your

own sinfulness, but get away to the sea of the infinite love. Thus keep memory in its right place, have it always near at hand so as to call it when needful, but have it so thoroughly under control that memory itself shall never become a spiritual temptation. Do not carry about your dead self as a burden, but catch some shadow of it that may be useful in chastening the right moment and in discouraging you from trusting too much to your own good works and your own self-righteousness.

You were "called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." You had a nickname. The Christian sects are fond of nicknaming one another. Sometimes they seem to have nothing else to do; they think it is an increase of their own piety to question the piety of other people. They insist that everybody shall do exactly as they do, or they cannot be within the divine circle. So the Gentiles were called Uncircumcision; the knife had never cut them; they were outside the pale. Whereas those who taunted the Gentiles so were only circumcised in the

flesh, cut in the body that is made for the tomb—a poor circumcision, a cutting that never touched the heart. So the Apostle comes to the aid of those who have been suffering from religious banter and mockery and spite and contempt. He would say, in effect, "Never mind; they do call you the Uncircumcision, but they themselves are not really circumcised. That is the true circumcision which touches the heart, which brings the scalpel or the penetrating knife to bear upon the motive and the conscience and the soul; he is a Jew who is one inwardly." So we must expect sometimes to be the subjects of banter and mockery. It is a great pity that persons should make little banners to wave over their own heads, as if they were elect and chosen to the exclusion of everybody else. There is a circumcision made by hands; there is a poor evaporating baptism of water, a miserable trick; there is a circumcision made with a spiritual knife; there is a baptism made by fire of the Holy Ghost, that never evaporates, and it proves itself by the fervour of the character, the nobleness of the manhood.

> Verse 12: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Remember that condition. The story of heathenism has its part in our own spiritual or Christian education. There was a time when we were without Christ: did we put ourselves into Christ? Never. How then did we come to be in Christ? "We love Him because He first loved us." Does the branch put itself into the vine? It either grows out of the vine or it is grafted into the vine by the husbandman who knows the culture of the vine and can treat it accordingly. "Not of works," as we have read in verse 9, "lest any man should boast." No branch should say, "I put myself into Christ, I inserted myself into the Vine and caught the holy wine of its living juice, and therefore I am as good as any other of the branches." All the vine must say, "We are of Christ"; all the branches must say, "We grow in Christ and out of Christ and by Christ, and from beginning to end it is all Christ." "Not of works, lest any man should boast," pointing to his own little

circumcisions and his own little miserable arrangements, conjectures, and guesses; his own clever intellectual inventions and theories, which will be scorched by the sun and vanish in smoke. "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel": literally, Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel; not aliens in the sense of never being in it or never being intended to be in it—worthless little loose things that had no connection with the universe, the mere rubbish of creation. That is not the meaning, but, being alienated; as it were, self-alienated, self-expatriated from the dear summer country in which God meant us to live and to bear fruit; being alienated, seduced, self-expelled; always included in the love and the purpose of God, but self-excluded by reason of our falling to the tempter when he seduced our souls. There are souls that are outside the kingdom of heaven; they have no right to be there, because they are souls in the Biblical sense of that term—they ought to be inside the circle of the redeemed and the blessed. They are outside, they are alienated; but inasmuch as they are men, we go out after them in

the name and in the power of the divine grace, and say, "Come in; there is redemption wrought for you; come, come because you are men, come because you are men redeemed—come!" Let the missionary, the evangelist, the holy, truly ordained propagandist go out and say to those who are alienated and far off and counted contemptible by the superficial Circumcision, "Come in. God waits for you, God has saved you; the worst first, come!" When the Gospel loses that tone of welcome and of hospitality, it has ceased to be a gospel: it is like a withered leaf blown by the chill autumnal wind. What is the case of most persons who are outside? They are without Christ, and they have no hope, and they are without God in the world. They live, and yet do not live; they have a name to live, and are yet dead; they are not in the churches, they are but too willing to blame the churches. We may be unjust even to churches. It is for the churches to fall back upon the awful process of self-examination and pass the tribulum that they may see what they are when they are torn to pieces as it were by iron teeth. We are

not always to accept the verdict of those who are outside upon those who are according to their lights doing their best inside. For my own part, I belong to all the denominations. I would not belong to any one denomination, because it does not give me room enough. I want the sky, not the ceiling; I want the whole firmament of the divine purpose, and not some little academic or sectarian construction of the divine purpose in creating and redeeming the world. Therefore, belonging to all denominations in the spirit of charity and appreciation, believing that no one denomination is the total Church, I can see good in all the communions, and I see good where I strongly differ in opinion. But what is opinion? where did it come from? who has any exclusive freehold rights in opinion? We may be one in a great purpose, united in a sublime loyalty. We are of different politics, but we are of the same patriotism. So in the Church of Christ we have all these differences and conflicts, and yet sometimes, blessed be God! there are summer mornings so bright that we can see through all the conflict and acknowledge

that the spirit of the living Christ is in every true heart, and that some people are of the Christian disposition who have not yet groped their way to the acceptance of the Christian dogma. Charity is the best critic; love is a judge that seldom errs. Let us therefore look upon those who are outside in a philanthropic spirit, and show them that we value them; they are not lost on the turnpikes of time, but they are sought out, inquired for, and earnestly yearned over by the spirit of redeeming love. That would give us a new interest in missions, home and foreign. There are those delightful English people so broad-minded that they would let the heathen alone. Where did these delightful, large-minded Christians come from? From heathendom; there was a time when their ancestors painted themselves blue, and did not wear any clothes worth mentioning, and were not indisposed to eat one another when circumstances seemed to point in the direction of that kind of gruesome festival. Yet these people who have come from heathenism gather their fur cloaks around them, and say that perhaps it would be just as well

to let the heathen alone. Persons who talk so never saw Christ, never felt the power of His love, have absolutely nothing whatever to do with Christ; and when they touch the cup of His blood they bring their blasphemy to a culmination.

Verse 13: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Verse 11, "Wherefore remember"; verse 13, "But now." The influence of the past upon the present, the uses of history as giving a foil to present privileges and delights and ineffable joys. We should not enjoy the banquet so much if we did not remember the days of hunger. There was a time when we had no food, when we had no home, when we were alienated from the commonwealth—vagrants, outcasts, nomads—having nothing to eat but what we took by thievery. "But now"! Who could value the gift of sight, the man who has always had it, or the man whose eyes have just been opened? and, as Sydney Smith says, the first thing the blind man saw was his Creator—all sights in one.

And we who have had our bodily sight all this time have never seen the Creator at all. Remember these musical words used by the Apostle, "But now." How different to-day! but now the summer warmth is round about us, but now the sea has ceased to trouble, and has become a uniting force binding nation to nation. "Ye who sometimes were far off." What a picture this is of distance; what an idea it is to bring the fact of distance as a spiritual illustration and indeed an interpretation given to the heart which the heart can hardly resist! Now we who were far off—on the other shore, in the unmeasured wilderness, having no ideas, sympathies, aspirations of a noble, pure, charitable, and divine quality. "But now"! There is a tone of suddenness in the exclamation. In a certain sense conversion must always be sudden: we see what we never saw before. In a certain sense every sunrise is a novelty: the sun can never be anticipated. We say in our ignorance, looking on a landscape dimly, through some murky atmosphere, "We can imagine what this landscape will be when the sun is on it." No! light can never

be imagined; we imagine some poor aspect or degree of it, but light is a daily surprise—light looked at with wise eyes is a continual miracle. We have seen the noonday light; aye, but there is a light above the brightness of the sun. No painters have imagined that. They have painted the driven snow and given some idea of white light on the canvas; but the mystery is beyond the brush, that any light can be above the brightness of the sun—God's symbol to us down here of what He is if we could but see Him through the meaning of the symbolism. You are poor interpreters of nature if you are not symbolical, if you are mere literalists; everything should have a meaning to you, and it is in the meaning that the thing is defensible, if defensible at all. Why, the very livery of the servant is a symbol; it may mean what the servant never dreamed it meant; every colour, every thread, every button may have a symbolical meaning. Certainly all nature is a grand parable; the lily has not been itself in all its virgin whiteness until it has lifted you out of your despair and made you pray to Him

who made the lily fairer than the robe of Solomon.

We are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." Many persons have a great objection to the word "blood," and I have a great objection to those persons. If we take out the blood of Christ we leave the New Testament without a theme and without a purpose. There are those who cannot see the symbolical aspect of the blood. To them blood is but red fluid that flows through living veins of man or bird or dog. Blood is life; blood is love; blood is the reality and spiritual meaning of things; blood is the Gospel. Do not be frightened by those persons who only take the common and degraded interpretation of the word "blood." They are not worthy of a place in your house, much less worthy of a place in your confidence. They will degrade everything. They can hear nothing in the nightingale, they can see nothing in the rose. Religion is only a mantle to them—not an angel, not a spirit, not a symbol. When we get back to the right conception of the Atonement of Christ we shall get back the Church, we shall get back the

Resurrection, and we shall recover, so to say, the Holy Ghost; and Christ's Church shall no longer be one of the institutions—she will rule all the institutions. How poor is the conception that anybody can rule the Church except the Church herself, in obedience to the daily inspiration of her living Lord! Rule the Church? Rule the dawn! Go to the hills and say when the sun must come; stop him until you are ready to receive him. Go to the sea and say, "Back! a higher than Canute commands thee. Back, thou encroaching flood!" Go and do that, and then come, ye poor stipendiary, or non-paid magistrates, and tell God's Church what she is to do. She is a living soul—she lives with her Lord, she confers with Him every moment; and, instead of the State ruling the Church, the Church must rule, sanctify, ennoble, and inspire the State.

> Verse 14: "For He is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition."

Jesus Christ is a breaker-down, and Jesus Christ is also a builder-up. The literal rendering of this "middle wall of partition" would

amount to some such word as "hedge." There has been a hedge between one garden and another, and that hedge has meant individuality and separation and exclusiveness. Jesus Christ comes and, so to say, eradicates the hedge; that is, takes it up by the roots, ploughs under the roots, and casts the roots up, where the sun can smite them unto death. It is the business of Christ to unite men. He does not find out the points of their differences and magnify them; He finds out the points of union, and He magnifies those points, and He says to contending men, "Whatever may be the little anecdote or incident you are fighting about, you are both men. I see the image of God in both of you; go back into the innermost sanctuary of the meaning of humanity, and cease your little fray." He is the Hope of nations; He will bring mankind into brotherhood. Nothing but the Gospel of Christ can destroy alienation and separation and bitterness, and bring contending forces to understand that the sword never did anything really beneficial and permanent, unless its action was followed up by another mode of life and a

higher and diviner conception of the purpose of being.

> Verses 15–17: "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that He might create in Himself of the twain one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh."

That is His great work in the world—to slay, yet to heal; to slay the enmity, that He may build up the friendship. The devil must be fought; only one Soldier can fight him, and that one Soldier is the Captain of our salvation. Forth, thou Son of God, and slay Apollyon, the evil spirit that is cruel to the hearts of men! Jesus Christ will accomplish this warfare; Jesus Christ will drive out all things evil. The process is long, the process is even severe, often rising to an agony of pain and often darkening the soul as with a heavy cloud of despair; but the process goes on, and it will emerge in One being enthroned King of kings and Lord of lords.

Verse 18: "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

We all pray in the same spirit; we may use different words: what of that? You can pray better in one way and I can pray better in another way, but there is no prayer outside Christ; it is the name of Christ that makes our petition effectual. Prayer is the mystery of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Any prayer without an appeal to Him or an appeal to God for His sake falls back like a bird lightning-struck. The humblest prayer, sanctified by His name and made vital by His blood, finds its way through all difficulties and infirmities of grammar and composition into the ear of the Father, and, as it were, brings back its own answer, as if a bird had been sent from paradise with some branchlet in its mouth to say that the Father is well pleased.

Verses 19–22: "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

What conceptions, what intellectual virility, what a noble outlook, what a grasp of things! There are no little-minded Christians; if they be Christians growing in Christ, they are growing towards perfectness of knowledge and completeness of character. And as for the Apostle's mixed metaphors, they would kill our poor little withering reputation; but he handles them all as a master might do. Here is citizenship, and temple-building, and growing, and reintroduction into the tree, the vine. A building, a growth, a citizenship —a wondrous masonry. Each mind will take out of the metaphor exactly its own meaning, and will be just to every other meaning. Remember, the Apostle Paul never refers to anything as dead and finished. If it is a temple, it is growing, it is being built up into some completer significance: and if it is a citizenship, it is a citizenship built on the central idea of household or home. And you who care for Citizen Sunday, care for home Sunday, be right in your own house, among your own children, and out of that will come all that is best in citizenship.

CHAPTER III

Verses 1–4: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)."

PAUL was more a talker than a writer. We have in many instances illustrations of his sometimes rough and incoherent method, the rapid action, the tumultuous action, of his most energetic and motion-like mind; and we must not judge him by the little carpenter's rules of rhetoric and continuity which we ourselves have fashioned and marked in plain figures. It takes a Paul to understand a Paul, but here and there we can come squarely down upon his meaning, and, touching him thus broadly and sympathetically, we can, when he is away from us, trust him to come back again in due time and to

bring with him odours of the Paradise beyond the morning.

It is natural to inquire into a man's credentials. Paul sometimes offers apparently a species of that most disastrous of all written instruments, a testimonial. At other times he says, in effect, "We have no written testimonials; we have the people, those who have believed our words, the saints who have grown in grace and in the beauty of holiness; they are our testimonials."

In the first verse of the third chapter Paul presents a testimonial of his own; he says, "Behold the baton, the mace, the thin leafy gold, the mitre, the crosier, the certificate with the broad seal upon it stamped with diverse effigies and omens." That would not be the New Testament reading; all these words I could find in some part of the English language, but not in Paul's epistles. In what guise, then, does he come? A "prisoner." We chain Paul to our pulpits a prisoner. Paul was a prisoner of the Lord—a prisoner for the sake of the Gospel. His gospel got him into a prison, mine has got me into a palace. There is a suspicious

evolution. We ought to smite ourselves with many a question regarding the kind of evolution through which we have personally and officially passed. Paul is in prison, but his apostleship is free. He says, "My environment is not altogether inviting to those who are looking out for poetry and beauty and garden glory; I am a prisoner, I am chained to another man, and I have to take my step from his step; but, Gentiles, I am your Apostle, designated as your missionary—I am coming." It is one of two things with a man's human relations: either he will crush them or they will crush him. You may know a man's quality by the way in which he handles what is pompously called "his environment." The Apostle Paul made no apologies. He did not see the little limited creature which bore his own name; he saw the great Apostles, the archangels of the earth—the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. "But," said he, "I have another testimonial, beyond the fact of my being a prisoner of Jesus Christ; I have a 'dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward': I long to read

my certificate to you, I have some deep things I want to tell you the very moment I come into your society; I have realised a special stewardship." "'My gospel' is a phrase I am not afraid of," Paul said in effect. Every man has his own gospel, his own God, his own conception of the universe; these entitle him to speak. Within their own limits, Paul had his text and sermon and testimony and revelation, and the whole apparatus of a divinely consecrated ministry, and he said, "I long to be with you; I have no time to smooth my words into rhythm, I want to beat out this love into thunder-tones, that all the Gentiles over all the sea may hear the music of the divine love." Did you discover all this yourself, Paul? "Nay," said he, "have you not heard that 'by revelation He made known unto me the mystery'?" It is a favourite word of the Apostle's—the mystery, the hidden mystery, the secret enwrapped sevenfold; but I see it, feel it, it imparts its own throb to my often fainting heart, and then I am strong with the strength of giants. This is the secret of a powerful ministry: suffering, the

grace of God, a special dispensation, a revelation, God making known to the heart of man what is in His own heart. We can do much in the schools, but we cannot communicate the mystery of God. There are some things which are to be learned only by experience, especially by suffering, by disappointment, by burying in a great cemetery ten thousand dead trusts, once beautiful flowers that we wore on the heart, and from which we received what we thought was heavenly odour; yet one by one we have had to surrender them, and the cemetery is full of dead hopes and withered ambitions. When such a man speaks to us we should not be mindful of his manner or his mere method; we should let him talk to us in his own way, and if now and then we can pick up a diamond or a pearl and have some right to it because of our appreciating love, then truly shall we be edified by the Apostle of the Cross.

> Verses 5, 6: "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."

We must not judge other ages by our own. We live in a great noonday; the sun would seem to be at the zenith, as if he were giving us every beam contained in his horn of light. How prone we are to go back far away into the paths of history and to judge men by our own standard of morality! Thus we make havoc of the Old Testament; we do not live ourselves back to the standpoint of those whom we criticise. We must not take down our electric lamp, and judge the little tinder spark that was the only spark possible centuries ago. Our Christianity has taught us but a poor lesson if it has only taught us to hold in contempt the men who laid the foundations of history. Know the refined man by his not remarking on the vulgarity of other people. Know the true saint of God who, reading the early stories of the Bible, can yet see the plasm or beginning of God's final idea of conduct, character, spiritual personality. Yet even in the Old Testament we have men as great as Paul. True, they were only exceptional cases, but they shrink from no comparison of stature, from no standard of quality; they

are not men who need to apologise when their names are mentioned; they saw the morning afar off, they caught the white light ere it shone upon the night-clouded hills. At the same time there were others in violent contrast to the prophets and minstrels of the Church, elect, ordained, and crowned of God for special ministry and trusteeship in spiritual dispensations. Even such contrastive characters we must judge as not having had all the privileges and benedictions which have almost nauseated our age to the point of satiety. We may have too many privileges: if we cannot digest them and assimilate them, they are but burdens to us. We shall either be lifted up or crushed down by the privileges, the honours, and the benedictions which we are given to enjoy. Let every man hear this in the innermost chamber of his heart. Privileges are not given to us to stand outside us; they are given to us for assimilation—growth—and then how can we have too many of them, when by the grace of God we turn them all into spiritual strength —into sublime and beneficent character?

Revelation is progressive. We think we are far advanced, we call this noonday; centuries hence we may call up these poor grey days, and speak of them as the comparatively dark ages of the soul. We have often been taught that we cannot imagine light; it is easier to imagine darkness than to imagine glory. The sun has a way of kissing every little weed and every small, frail, trembling leaf into significance and almost personality. A great engraver is the sun; he plants the image of God on a grass-blade or works it into a dewdrop. What we do in regard to the old Scriptures we must do in regard to many venerable characters; we must remember in their case, too, that they had not our privileges. Yet amongst the characters of the olden centuries there are men who would put us to blushing shame. They lived with God, so to say; it was sometimes hard to distinguish which was the man and which the suppliant and which the saint; there was a curious in-working and interworking of agency and ministry and experience and consciousness, until the men themselves became living

mysteries, not to be read by the public eye, but only to be understood by an indescribable and incommunicable masonry of soul, so that hand clasped hand and passed the password without the opening of lips.

> Verse 7 : " Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power."

That is the true education of the ministry. It does not exclude other education, but all other education must of necessity be secondary, auxiliary, co-operative. The great education is the education of the soul, the implanting in the soul of "the gift of the grace of God." What does it mean? No man can tell you in words; every man can feel it in power. What is it that makes the poet? No man can tell; the poetry is its own revelation, and this is probably the only explanation we shall ever get. When we hear the true poetry we seem always to have heard it; it does not startle us by its originality so much as remind us that somewhere, on the shore of some great sea, under the shadow of some great temple forest, we have heard these wondrous tones

and notes before. The true poetry belongs to every soul, as the light belongs to every child. It is to us that the Gospel must manifest, expound, and vindicate itself. But not in vocables; the Gospel is not some trick in grammar, it is not some expert way of shuffling the rules of syntax and prosody; it is an inner experience, within another experience, refined and sublimed into an inexplicable consciousness of the nearness and the power of God, the sweetness of the love of the Cross.

> Verses 8–12: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him."

Was this some false pride on the part of the Apostle? By no means. How, then, is he thrown into this minority of quality; how, then, is he put down the very lowest

on the list? Because of the marvellous view which for the moment he has had of the unsearchable riches of grace, the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God. The Apostle saw such wondrous things outside of him and beyond him that he himself shrank into nothingness. The candle is a very useful little light, but it will not even mention its own name when the sun bursts upon it in his great glory; if we could hear the candle, it would say, "Put me out, take me away; in the eye of that glory I perish!" So Paul oftentimes got such great and overpowering views of the grace, the mystery, the love, the future, that he was less than the least; he shed his individuality and became as the nothing of nothingness because of the ineffable revelation which extinguished our poor little mornings and our frail, transitory, struggling summers. Woe to the man who is greater than his text! woe to any preacher who is not abased and humbled and destroyed in the presence of the Cross he preaches! When the Apostle compared himself with other

men he used no such language as this; he was head of them all, he was not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles. But then he was walking upon a purely human plane; in the passage before us he is walking upon a plane that seems to run right through the very noontide of heaven's own glory; hence his self-depreciation. And this will be the experience of every man who is living, moving, and having his being in God. We must get away from the world of anecdote and circumstance and petty conception; we must sail the shoreless oceans; we must bathe in the infinite glory of heaven's own vision of light.

Verse 13: "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

You must and will by and by get the right view of tribulations. "Shall I tell you where I am by the grace of God?" said Paul. Why, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we glory in tribulations also; we have taken up crowns of thorns and pressed them into our heads, until by the succour of our blood they have blossomed

into coronals. You may touch a tribulation too lightly. Like the nettle, it will sting timidity; you may grasp it and defy its poison. There are times in Christian experience when we talk about our tribulations and our great distresses and our intolerable misery; and all such threnody is perfectly right up to the moment of its being wailed in the circling wind. And we will talk about these same experiences more and more, and as we talk about them the grace of God will fill in all the spaces and create a new energy, and exercise a new distributive influence amid all the actions and energies of the life. Then, when we speak about our tribulations a third time, a certain note will drop out of our voice and another note will come into the voice, and we shall be able in the long run to say, "Tribulation! we glory in it; our loss is gain, our grief is a sacrament of love, a seal of election."

Now the Apostle utters one of his grand prayers:

Verses 14–21: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom

> the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Oh, what an outpouring of the river of love and grace and faith from the heart of this chained prisoner! His body may be in durance vile, but his soul is on wings. He passes from this dark environment into the very temple and sanctuary of divine grace, and pours out one of those grand prayers that stand absolutely unrivalled in the liturgies of the Church. How tender is this man! He shames almost the tenderness of John; he was in all respects a greater man than John. He was a man of immense intellectual capacity, intense spiritual fervour, great mental tenacity, and power of continuity—gifted with that singular power of penetration that bores the rocks and the

mountains, and carries the highway of God through their darkest places. Yet did ever man bring such lovely fragrant flowers to lay upon the altar of the Church? This is the man who wrote the poem of love; this is the man who said to the Philippians, "I have you in my heart." A sevenfold man was Paul; he will probably be the mystery of the Church "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." He is sometimes so simple that he sends a message to the man and the woman in the little house, and has a word for the little child, and delivers by the hands of his helpers all sorts of blessings and salutations to people unknown to fame, but known to Paul; and Paul could give fame—to have one's name spoken by Paul would be renown. He was never ashamed of any man, woman, or child who had helped him; he never forgot a name; he carried names from city to city, and sent them back again, as it were, on wings of love, touched as with a father's fingers of benediction and holy sealing. These are the great men who have blessed the ages—the men who have sent up to heaven for country

and home and Church these great noble prayers that have taken the kingdom of heaven with violence. There is no personality so utterly contemptible as the man who edges himself into the Church for the purpose of pronouncing upon prayer, who has never fathomed the meaning of such sublime heart-risings and holy aspirations and benevolent desires as those which characterise the great prayers of the greatest heart that Christ has ever captured by His spear. Enter the sanctuary of such prayers, and do not answer the caviller, but despise him. He knows not the tongue of this land; its grammar is an unknown music to him. The man who could breathe such prayers will confirm his own saintliness by his death. A man of this quality is never killed midway; there is too much of him to perish by the roadside; he must fulfil his course, fight the fight out to the end. It was all in the prayer—in its vastness, its depth, its tender saintliness. He who can see into the true quality of that prayer can see gleaming beyond it a crown of life. Blessed be God for the man who desired for us to

know that which cannot be known—to know the love that passeth knowledge! Such paradoxes are part of the divine revelation. To know that we cannot know may be the beginning of knowledge. To know that which passeth knowledge is to have a great possession—yea, an inexhaustible and imperishable inheritance.

CHAPTER IV

Verse 1: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

I HAVE already written that I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles; I must repeat the fact. There are some experiences that burn themselves into our souls, so that repetition becomes a natural necessity. I lay before you no printed letters, no sealed certificates, no proud but worthless pedigrees; for I, too, have a pedigree, or had until I burned it. I come before you with a chain, with a stigma, a brand; and if that does not impress you, no amount of sealed parchment would worthily beget your confidence or your admiration. I am a poor prisoner, another man keeps the key of the gaol—I am on the inside of the gloomy door; but, though a

prisoner, I invite you to freedom—to an ever-widening franchise in the kingdom of light—and I send to you all the available tokens of love. Remember that you are called "men"; you are not toys of man's making—you are twice over the creation of God. There is a great voice in you; it calls you to liberty and service, to patience and hope. Every Christian soul is called; he is not in the kingdom of God at his own bidding—he has accepted an invitation, he banquets at the Lord's table by right of electing grace. Let no man whisper in your ear one solitary word that would lead you to contract or to undervalue your sublime and imperishable vocation. Men, you are answering a cry, you are responding to a voice; hear it, and spring forward with the alacrity of spontaneous and obedient love.

How was this to be done? The Apostle answers thus:

> Verses 2, 3: "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Do not chide one another, do not seek to

prove your earnestness by rebuking the languor of souls that are not equal in vitality to your own. We cannot all walk at the same pace; stop for the slow man—for the soul that would be quicker if it could—and show that you have entered into the gentleness and patience of Christ by waiting until infirmity has had time to gather itself together. "Forbearing one another in love." We are wondrously one, yet more wondrously, for the time being at least, more than one—multitudinous, innumerable; all the human fractions being required to make up the total integer of God's image and God's purpose in creation and in redemption. There is not a word here about mastery, domination, superiority, or even flaunting, ambitious, and insane energy. The words are of a different temperature; they would not hurt a little child in the nursery, they might soothe affliction in its hottest pain, they might encourage those who have no confidence in themselves. The words are like beautiful pearls, and pearls must ever stand alone in gracious solitude; not needing a companion, yet wanting all the other pearls to make

up some circlet of grace, some sign of innermost beauty. These are the pearls of God: lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, love. What precious stones are in the casket of God! Surely we might come in somewhere and say, "Lord of the casket, may this pearl be mine, or that, or yonder diamond that holds the glory of the morning?" See how universal are all these attributes. There is nothing here of the nation, the parish, the mother tongue, the narrow locality: these words belong to all languages, and they grow in the sand and in the richest soil of Paradise—they belong to the music of the winds. Lowliness and meekness, and longsuffering and forbearance, and everything done in the spirit of tender and sympathetic love. Paul says in effect, "Gentiles, this is the calling with which you are called"; God never addressed a more thrilling appeal to all the men of all the centuries. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There is a spirit and there is a letter. Let Paul himself tell us how the case stands herein:

Verses 4–6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

That is the true unity. One Faith, a thousand creeds. Man loves to make little creeds. Ever since man discovered the art of writing he has been trying in vain to thumbnail the revelation of God, and to carry it about with him as a kind of private property. Man will not recognise the difference between faith, which is atmosphere or climate, and creed, which is to-day's weather, showery or shiny as the case may be. Men will confuse weather with climate, and think that they must live up to the day, and have some umbrella creed to suit the day of rain, and some other adornment to suit the noonday of summer sunshine. Poor man! He must have tools; he sells tools in boxes; he is particularly fascinated by two-edged tools; he cuts himself, and thinks that the drawing of his own blood in small red spots will bring to him the sympathy of somebody surely, and that thus he will become an object of at least momentary and transient attention. There

is one faith; it includes all the creeds, as the great astronomic movement carries with it the mountains and the valleys, the seas and the forests, and rolls them into one sphere of unity and beauty and gladness.

"One body"—spiritual, mystical, inexplicable; an experience without language; an emotion that scorns even the help of music. "One faith, one baptism." But we have made little pools and puddles, and have dabbled ourselves and half washed ourselves in many a tank of the plumber's making. That is not baptism. Why accept a little, narrow interpretation, when the great interpretation is offered to us in the love of God? "One baptism" of enthusiasm, inspiration, fire. But some people like to go about the world dripping and dropping more or less under the impression that they are baptized. No man is baptized that is not baptized with fire. "One God and Father of all." One colour, though there are seven; but the seven make the one, and the one permits itself to be divided into the seven. The seven spirits of God become a great common inspiration in the history of mankind. "One God," not

the solitary God. Some people do not understand what the word "one" means; they think one is a stroke. But they do not know what a stroke is; a stroke may be a million points. There is no stroke—there is only a seeming unity of points; the microscope would divide your stroke into points, atoms, little isolated pieces of pencil or of chalk or of coloured ink. No man can define the word "one." There is no "one" until there is much more than one. One does not mean solitude, it means completeness, companionship, sphering out the first plasmic purpose. The tree is one, yet every acorn that hangs upon it is a Bashan in possibility.

When we are more anxious about the faith than about the creed we shall have a real Church in the country. Oftentimes we have heard men pray, and we could not detect one controversial tone in all the holy adoration and petition; but the moment they have stood up to preach we have contradicted them, if not audibly, yet mentally; because preaching has latterly, in these few later centuries, become a sack of opinions, which

a man, taking by the two bottom corners, shakes out in presence of the congregation, and supposes that he is preaching the Gospel. It is very sad, even to groaning and to the shedding of many hot tears! "One faith"—not to be defined. Faith is never to be written down. You have a pocketful of creeds; you cannot put your faith in your pocket, nor can you write it, nor can you tell it; you can hint at it, you can breathe it, you can live in its holy and inspiring spirit. Faith is possible to a little child—trusting, clinging, depending, mute, looking up into the mother's face. That is faith, and the angels have got no further on; they are still at the same monosyllable. It will take us eternity to spell it, and to pronounce it, and to realise it. All the Churches have faith in the decree that they are true. We express our faith in many ways. Some people must have a written faith—a faith which they can run into the dimensions of a placard. But that is not faith; it is only a creed, a symbol, an index. Faith never comes out of the soul to chatter the language of the day; it abides in the heart—enlarging,

expanding, warming, uplifting, and gladdening the heart. The Roman Catholic and the Salvationist both live in faith, though they would fight twenty-four hours round by the clock every day if they had the unholy chance; and the silent Quaker and the non-silent Methodist both have faith, but they have such different creeds, and such different pocket volumes which they carry about with them to prove that the other party is wrong! Why do we not get down to or up to a right conception of faith?—the soul at its best, the soul in unspeakable delight and in unutterable confidence in the love of God. Emerson said that when Dr. Lyman Beecher got to heaven, and found Dr. Channing there, he would say, "Why, Channing, are you here?" And Channing would answer, "Why, Beecher, are *you* here?" There is one faith, and until we realise the faith, rather than the creed, we shall have divisions and alienations and controversies, out of which livelihoods are made.

In view of all this massive unity—one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all—are

we called upon to live in vague incoherence? or has our very individuality an organic relation to the unspeakable Unity? Let Paul himself reply:

> Verses 7 and 11: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

So we have diversity as well as unity; we have the seven colours in one white, and we have the one white spreading itself over the seven prismatic representations of its ineffable beauty. God never quenches individuality; He never magnifies unity at the expense of individual gift and responsibility. Though we are all one, yet we are in another sense one as if we were all, as if we represented the race; we have in us more than belongs to our mere or narrow individuality. Having come up through millions of centuries, we have in us the dog and the tiger, the fish and the bird, with some streak of angelhood, and some mixture of music and poetry and light. Sometimes we are greater mysteries to ourselves than God is to our

souls. We are so many, so different; seven different men in one day—crawling with the beast in the dust, flying with the angel in the heavens. We have not, therefore, to run ourselves into some wild socialism; we must always realise the individual gift and the individual responsibility. The Apostle must not envy the prophet, the prophet must not contemn the evangelist, and the evangelist must not undervalue the pastor or the teacher. We belong to one another; every man has his own distinct calling of God. Why do we not recognise this? Why compare one man with another to the disadvantage of either? Who would go forth into the meadow and pluck a handful of grass-blades, and compare the one with the other, as if they were created by different creators? or who would take a tuft of grass and compare it with a bunch of grapes or a pound of apples? Why not recognise the poet, and make room for him? and why not ask the arithmetician to go sometimes and sit down by the side of the poet? and why not ask the singer and the speaker to hold festival together? and why admit into the banqueting

hall, the commonwealth, by one low, narrow door? Why not recognise that we are all required to make up one manhood, and be thankful for each other's gifts? To that are we called in Christ.

For what purpose did Christ institute all these ministries in His Church? The Apostle tells us in the twelfth verse:

> "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

You would think there are three things mentioned here, but there are not; the punctuation misleads us. After the word "saints" is a little comma which interferes with the Apostle's sense, and in fact destroys it. Obliterate the comma, and read the sentence thus: "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry"; getting the saints ready to minister; taking them in as apprentices, and turning them out journeymen. For the perfecting of the saints to do work, so that when they leave the process of education which is possible to them here and now, they may take with them a certificate for the perfecting of the

saints for the work of the ministry—getting them all ready to execute this sacred ministry. Why, it is like training a number of servants? Exactly; you have struck upon the image precisely. It is a training-house for servants? Yes! the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. We teach painters and artists of many names; we distribute the professions. Let us look in, if you please, upon this man who is keeping a school for the training of musicians. How he explains the notes, their combinations, their different values; how he lectures upon the production of the voice, and does it in a voice which shows that he has never studied the art himself; and how he puts all these unhappy pupils through divers exercises, himself being happy in the degree in which he makes them unhappy; and we say to him—if we dare speak to such a man—"What are you training these young souls for?" "For the ministry of music, for the perfecting of the pupils for the platform, for the orchestra, for public execution, and for the charming and delighting of public audiences." That is the meaning of the

Apostle, in so far as a spiritual analogy can accommodate itself to one less spiritual. "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry"; for the training of the servants that they may do the Master's work. It is like getting a ship ready in port. What are you doing to this ship? Getting it ready for the sea. You seem to be trying the timbers, and trying the iron, and trying the joints, and trying the masts, and to be making every possible criticism upon the whole purpose and construction. What is your idea in doing this? Getting the ship ready for sea, fully equipped, ready for the waves. And so Jesus Christ, in establishing all these orders of ministry, is seeking as His object the perfecting of the saints for service, training every man to do some work, to do it well, to do it to the best of his ability, to do it without ever looking at the clock. Love has no clock.

Verse 13: "Till we all come——"

The immediate point is not what we are coming to, but the fact that we are coming,

and that something is coming to us, and that this double action is the secret of the inspiration, the culture, the strengthening of our innermost life. The text therefore is "till . . . until"—the something that says, You have not finished yet; there is another hill to climb, and then you will see it; there is another stream to ford, and on the other bank of that stream you will see what flowers can grow, and how mean are all the plants on this side the river. Till the sunshine comes, till the heavenly band appears and sends its thundering anthem through the quivering sky; till then hope on! You have not yet arrived, but you are proceeding, you are on the right road, and you have this little singing word to cheer you in all your climbing and in all your descending and in all your fighting and in all your sorrow "until—!" It would be a most profitable study to collate all the main passages in which we have the music of this "till and until," and we should rise from the perusal of the oracles satisfied that though we have yet much to do there is a climacteric point, there is a just-now-rising dawn, the

many tints of which can just be seen over the highest hill. Blessed are the prophets, forerunners who catch the first gleam of that morning light! They cannot keep the intelligence to themselves; there are some gospels that *must* be preached. When a man who is out far beyond us sees the first rising of the light which the ages have been waiting for he will cry, "Come! the day has risen." Even selfishness could not stifle that gospel, mayhap because selfishness could never receive it. The reason that people do not receive the Gospel is because they do not know it, nor do they feel it; it is at present but an intellectual conception or a moral conjecture; it is a mere study in ethics. When the Gospel itself, with all the heat of its own red blood, gets into any of us we must preach the Gospel to every creature. Let us be thankful for the men who have gone ahead—the men who first saw the morning. How long we have been waiting for it! It seems century after century as if the slumberer would never awake; yet now and again, from Genesis to Revelation, there comes a voice which says, "Until!" It may

be to-morrow, it may be a century hence—but it will come; and what we have to do is to hold on until the dayspring break in all its soft radiance and its implied eternities of summer on the earth that has been so long moaning, waiting, and mingling its prayers with a large share of dejection and despondency.

The keyword, therefore, is "till" or "until"; the same word—the same idea—and that idea one of encouragement and assurance, a word to hide in the heart and to listen to in the darkness when there seems to be no "until"—when there seems to be but one settled frown on the brow of time. Yet the custodians of God's decrees—the divinely appointed priests of the eternal ark—are enabled to hear the sweet word "until"; and such men—unknown, mayhap despised—have kept the world alive.

Where does this word "till" or "until" occur? Where all the great words occur, as I have told you a thousand times. Where do all the great words occur? In the Book of Genesis; and you have never read it! I speak not to the few who are familiar with the Divine Word, but to the many who never

read it. You do not read the Divine Word when you only read it in the letter. The Divine Word is not a letter, but a spirit; it is not written music, but music sung and music brayed out from brass and throbbed as it were on living drums. We must go to Genesis for our first grand "until" (chapter xlix. 10). Jacob is dying, he knows that his life is slowly but certainly trickling away; he calls all his sons around him, and makes such speeches as mortal man never made either before or since; and most of you have never read them! never was such eloquence heard before; there are no forged climaxes, no mechanically built periods, no half-forgotten and hesitant recitations; but great, grand, flowing eloquence. When the patriarch came to his son Judah he waxed almost as eloquent as when he came to his son Joseph, but not altogether as eloquent. The old man was at his best when his hands as it were groped for the head of Joseph, but he was beautiful when he spake to Judah—Judah who bore an awful scar of unfaithfulness and badness, but which was much covered up, if not wholly healed, by processes

of grace which only experienced souls understand. Said Jacob, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." There is the "till" or the "until," the word of promise, the gleam of hope, the pledged morning. No man can tell us what "Shiloh" means; we have had the word in Hebrew and in Greek, and we have called around it a whole market-place of expositors, a whole gallery and Sanhedrim of learned men, but they can make nothing really final out concerning all the wells and fountains and springs that are hidden in this word Shiloh. But there is a Christian acceptation of the term which is sufficient for us. The ancient Jews, indeed, associated the name Messiah with the word Shiloh, and regarded them as practically interchangeable terms; but the ancient Jews did not know Messiah as we know Him; therefore we must attach a Christian interpretation to Shiloh, and find him in Bethlehem, and on Calvary, and on Olivet, and away yonder in the city of the temple of intercession. Enough for the present exposition that there was a promised

Man, soul, light, song, something away in the ages beckoning on the human race and feeding it with corn of heaven. You cannot empty the ages, you cannot deplete the future. The future itself seems to be a term of welcome and hospitality and most generous promise. We can look at it from any point of view we choose, and yet the human heart says, Your hope is in the future; to-morrow there may be One blessed among women who will give the world a Saviour, and you cannot shut out that "until"; you can modify it, mutilate it, pervert it—but there is the "until." There shall be an evil reign until He come whose right it is to sit upon the uppermost throne. This song of faith also sings in each individual heart. It is to-morrow that Shiloh will be here, it is in a week or two that we shall hear from the far-away places that which will make us glad. Why, in one little month we shall hear tidings that will more than compensate us for all our sorrow and dismay and self-accusation. In a century the world will grow greener grass and the heaven will be clothed with a diviner blue. In five

centuries who knows what the old earth will be? In a thousand years there may not be a grave in all the mould of the globe. It is because we have these great shining, singing promises that we are able to suffer the present; if this were all, we could not live another day. There are points of agony and of misery which would end our poor feeble existence if there were nothing beyond, if no Shiloh were preparing to come, if no sweet spring with vernal flowers were lingering by the blue Tyrrhenian sea. It is because we know that the Shiloh spring is coming that we can bear the darkness of these December days, which are hardly worthy to be called days at all. June and December could never talk about days, they would not understand one another; June has one lexicon and December another, which his dim eyes can hardly read. It is the Shiloh that is coming that keeps the world alive, and all the atheists and agnostics and scorners and mockers cannot keep out of view or out of the sphere of holy, happy influence this grand Shiloh idea. The child will be born, the man will grow, the king will ascend the throne,

and then we shall know why the universe was created, and the explanation will be grand, solemn, sufficient.

Another "until" we find in Psalm lxxiii. 17, "Until I went into the sanctuary." Then I saw all about it. The sanctuary is the only place where you can see everything, Church or State, just as it is. You see nothing really until you see it from the point of view of the altar. The religious soul—the soul that bathes itself in the stream of the divine wisdom and the divine light—is the greatest soul under heaven. All other souls are little pedlars compared with the religious soul that has the key of heaven—the *entrée* of the hospitable skies. A poor man was sadly troubled because wicked people were prospering exceedingly: their gardens were full of flowers, and they had roses with next to no thorns on them, and they had herbs and oliveyards and vineyards and all manner of increase, yet they never sang a psalm—they never laid a tribute on God's altar. Their eyes were standing out with fatness, they had more than heart could wish; God was excluded from their whole

imagination; and yet as to banking—as we should modernly call it—and commerce and prosperity, they had it all; and poor Asaph was hardly strong enough to carry his own harp. When he saw these almost beasts—certainly these minus men—his feet well-nigh slipped, he was as nearly down flat on his back as ever a man was on treacherous ice. And then, having just strength enough to crawl into the sanctuary, he said in effect, "What are all these lights? what is this I hear? what are these explanations that are rising in my mind? who speaks? who makes the night dead?" if there was any audible voice able to make him hear this music beyond the merest outline and beginning But thought came on thought, reflection followed upon reflection; Asaph put this together with that, and finally he said, "I see it! behold, it was they who were set in slippery places, it was they who were as bullocks fattening in a succulent pasture: aye, thou didst train them and fat them for the knife: I see it now!" We should see all things if we went into the sanctuary in their right proportion, because in their right perspective and their

right light. We are so meddlesome, and we will discuss daily details, and we are first troubled by one man and then we are troubled by another, and then in the middle of the day there is a sure and certain lie that comes and perplexes us more than ever as to what we heard yesterday and heard this morning. Why can we not leave the detail alone? and why does every washerwoman suppose that she could settle better than any statesman what ought to have been done in certain great national crises? Only in the sanctuary can we get the solution of all things. Sometimes that solution comes in the form of increased patience—a deepening sense of our dependence upon the living God. We do not always get an explanation in words and in grammatical phrases skilfully and mechanically piled into paragraphs which we can measure and understand. It is not always so that God works. Somehow in the sanctuary there is an atmosphere, as there is in the chamber of death. Tell me what is that weird, wondrous atmosphere that gets around the soul in the sight of the dead body. You are then really in the sanctuary,

though not nominally so. The chamber of sickness may be a sanctuary; the chamber of your own closet, where you offer secret prayer to God and commune silently with the Spirit, may be the sanctuary. But in the ordinary signification of the term the sanctuary points to fellowship in worship, to a commonwealth of praise, to a common inheritance of grace—a great mystery, no doubt, but known well to those to whom God has given keys and promises and a sure word of prophecy. It is the religious man who should govern the State; it is the Church that should rule the empire. We have inverted things, and have gone to the market-place to understand what can only be explained in the sanctuary. But the day is coming when the sanctuary—the holy, redeemed, blood-bought Church of Christ—shall tell the world what to do.

We might call on our way at the house of Canticles—the house of the love-dreams—and there in chapter ii. 17 we shall read, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away." That is a grand "until." Is

it possible that the sun can find his way through all the grey cold clouds of December? Is there a day promised? Will the day break? Who ever heard the gates of the morning creak as they swung back on their golden hinges? Who ever heard a tramping army bringing up the sun as if by strength of muscle? Who ever heard the stars make a noise? Yet through all this wondrous "process of the suns" there is a silent march, a silent incoming of the Messianic period, and when the day breaks upon the grave, the grave shall be as a cradle; and when the day breaks on sorrow and sickness, failure, disappointment, and manifold misery, we shall see the whole sphere of life in its proper colours, relations, and proportions, and find that God has been busy in the darkness. God does wonderful things in the night time; what He has done in the sanctuary of densest darkness we shall never know till the shadows flee away; then we shall find that all the while He has been building a palace for us—a right glorious and royal house—and making things ready for our souls away beyond the humble paths

of the stars which now we think a long way off, but we shall think them a longer way off still when we get above them and look down on them with a kind of gracious contempt for their twinkling and quivering lamps. Hope on! There is a word in the wintry air, a song in the wintry night—"Until!"

Paul's idea of "until" was a coming to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. "Perfect" does not mean what it is often supposed to mean and what people get up more or less futile and senseless meetings for the purpose of promoting. There are no perfect men in that narrow sense. There is probably no sin greater in its possible implications than sinlessness as it is narrowly and imperfectly understood. Not until resurrection has done for the body what regeneration has done for the soul shall we know the meaning of "perfect" in its moral and spiritual sense. Meanwhile, it may signify the culmination of a new period, the advancement, chapter after chapter, of a new book, promotion after promotion to school after school in the higher academics of creation;

it may mean as much as can be done here and now, but not perfection except as the end is the beginning of another period. The Bible ends, Revelation can only begin. Sometimes we have heard our dear little children say that they have finished school. We know the sense in which those dear little hearts use the word "school." We can never get beyond the school of God, but we may go from class to class, from grade to grade, and at the conclusion of each grade we may say, "So much is perfect; that is done, but it is only done as a pedestal is done on which the statue is to stand, or is only perfect in the sense in which a field has been sowed with good seed which will come up thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold." And so, as experience is multiplied by experience, and as consciousness is added to consciousness, we may seem at each particular crisis to be so far perfect. But the perfection is away beyond the sanctuary of the sun—away in the city which has no temple—because the whole city itself is but a temple: no paradox in words. We must die to see it, and we shall see no temple, because the whole heaven

is one vast radiant house of God. Brothers, let us cheer ourselves with this "till" and "until." Do not let us rush at hasty judgments; let us practise a religion of repose, let us exemplify the piety of rest. And when people ask us the vain question when shall we reach the last perfection, we shall say, "The hour is hidden with God, but the promise is that we are to wait until Shiloh come.'

Let us continue as far as possible the discourse which we began on Thursday, studying the "Till" and the "Until" of prophecy and providence and soul-sustaining promise. We swept over considerable space on Thursday; there remains some ground yet to be traversed: the "till" and the "until" of time—the point that seems to go beyond time, to anticipate ages that are hardly yet reckonable within the four corners of the calendar of time. We could not live without the "till" and the "until" of the Divine Book. Sometimes the period is far off; sometimes it is to-morrow; yet we could not live without it, though it be ages away beyond

the arithmetic of counted centuries. Nor could we live without that event which is going to take place in the to-morrow of imagination. "Day" seems to mean, if strictly limited to itself, despair, then suicide —then we see a light just on the mountain top; it may be but a candle-gleam, but it is a gleam; meanwhile, all light is poetry and liberty and strength. When naturalists have written all they have to write about the great mystery and action of light, they have only written a preface to a course of sermons. There are moral uses of light, poetries of light, paradises in every star-ray and in every blink of the sun.

Let us add to our list of "untils." Ezekiel has a grand "until" or "till"—the words are the same in meaning. "Until He come whose right it is"—to save, to reign, to direct, to take all the ribbons into His own hands and drive the chariot of the universe as He pleases. What a word of cheer, solace, strengthening encouragement, and most blessed and inspiring assurance! There

is always One coming "whose right it is." He does not come in an apologetic attitude, with a compromise from some threatened power, with a proposition that this and that should be divided between light and darkness; He comes with right. Nothing is settled until it is settled rightly. Do not believe that hush is peace; do not believe in any peace that is not built on righteousness. Understand, however, the largeness of that word "righteousness"; it is not my right, your right, the right of some third or unknown party, a selfish and limited right; it is a righteousness that involves the very nature and essence of the Deity. What is a crooked plumb line? Nothing, worse than nothing. What if we trifle with the joint of the square and give it a little tip to a hardly measurable angle? Will it still be a square? No. You killed the square when you changed the angle. Geometry is sensitive; mathematics will not bear to be affronted; mathematics will have an avenging visitation upon those who trifle with rectitude. The arithmeticians say that figures—poor, plain figures—have affections. Who could have thought that

an arithmetician would have dreamed so deeply? He looks as if he himself were but a superficies, and sometimes he gets into such ecstasies as to speak about the passions of numbers and the affections of numbers; then he becomes religious, and builds what small altar he can with his brickdust. On what do the ages feed? On the promise that One is coming who will bring right with Him, and who will reign because He is right: who will sit upon a throne that cannot be torn down, because it fits into the whole scheme of things and is the part and the coronation of processes immeasurable and inconceivable. This will get rid of many paltry, petty, and insufficient teachings of compromise and balancing and settled covenantings and perfidious double commissions—taking alike from the buyer and the seller—and considering that all is going well because nobody knows anything about it. Nothing goes well that is in itself wrong. There is a tumbling day—a day of upset and ruin. "Be sure your sin will find you out!" thunders through the universe, and no man can cough it down. If we could get rid of

the notion that we have to handle and to settle things we should be greatly strengthened and greatly relieved. There is next to nothing that we have to handle. Some people can scarcely handle their own raiment; some persons need trainbearers to carry their poor skirts; and men are soon bereaved, stripped, and depleted of every high ambition and crafty cunning policy, and are left on the roadside with coronets that never ruled and with ambitions that were but decorated abortions. Those who live by faith live in peace; they are perfectly sure that "all things work together for good to them that love God"; and nobody loves God who does not love the right—who does not love righteousness—and who takes a little, narrow, parochial, selfish view of things. We are so soon overdone: we write fables and draw pictures about a man who tried to carry a globe on his shoulders. Why, it is but a poor bean—nay, it is but a poorer pea—which he carries, and not at all worth mentioning in any catalogue of the stars. We are tempted to think that nearness is bigness, and we forget that there is One coming—coming

with the clouds, coming with the morning, coming after the shortest day has had its little dark reign; coming, and coming to remain by force of right. I wish men would not tinker with things; that they would simply know their limitations; that they would go into the sanctuary of God, and sit there; and if they cannot speak they can be silent, and if they cannot sing they can speak, and if they can neither sing nor speak they can have wrought in them by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost the miracle of patience. Is it nothing to have had all these men about us who have said "till," "until"—the men of eyes who have seen the far-off light and interpreted it to those of us who dwell in the shady valley?

There are wondrous instances of "till" and "until" in the New Testament. For example, in Matthew ii. 13, "until I bring thee word." That is a new scheme of lodgment. How long have I to remain here? and the angel says, Until I come back. I want to be moving. Sit still! I do not see why I cannot proceed further.

Wait until I bring thee word in thy little business, thy little household environment, thy limited village or limited circumstances; lodge there until I bring thee word: I will not forget thee: God knows the address—He never forgets an address, He never mixes in indiscriminate confusion the dwellings of those who love Him with the dwellings of those who despise Him: wait "until!" Thank God for that "until"! It is itself a limitation. Whilst it appears to be the indication of a great space or of great time, it fixes a point of return, of deliverance, of liberty, of light. Oh, it is so long! So it is; but the length of the waiting is part of the education of the soul. When shall I see him, see her, again? could I not see for one little golden hour in the week? I ask no more. And the angel said, Remain until I bring thee word; I watch all the dressing and preparation and equipment; I know when spirit should meet spirit, when alliances should be completed or renewed; when the veil should be blown to pieces or withdrawn like a curtain of film; I understand the counsel of God in this matter; stop until—until—until.

The Apostles were not men much given to a very high order of patience. Like ourselves, they always wanted to be doing something. Some men cannot be really happy unless they are doing a little; it may be only opening and shutting an umbrella, but they must be at it, they cannot keep their hands off it. Well, they were made so, and God will read such riddles to us when we have nothing better to do than to listen to their reading. The Apostles were men of this sort: Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel? Wait; it is not for you to know the times and the seasons. What shall we do when we are bereaved of our Lord? Tarry in Jerusalem. How long? Until ye be endued with power from on high. What are we to do in the meantime? Do nothing. We think we can be doing something. You think wrongly. Do not do anything in your own strength, because you will only live to apologise for having done it. Do not imagine that you see anything as it really is; the secret of the centuries is with God. Tarry ye in Jerusalem until you get the power. There

is no mistaking power. The difference between one man and another often is that one man can do it, and another man cannot do it; and the great mischief is that the man who cannot do it is tempted of the devil to believe that he can do it as well as the other man. We have to wait until there is a great flood-tide of power, a conscious access or accession of strength; when that mighty power comes upon us, then we may go forth and do the Lord's will. Waiting is education. We are taking in elements of strength when we hardly know that we are doing so. But one clear day at the seaside, when the wind is coming over the sea, sometimes makes an old man young again. What has he been doing? Nothing; and doing everything by doing that nothing: putting himself into right relation, waiting for proper opportunities—lying sweetly, softly, dreamily in the arms of God, the Father-Mother; next day he enters upon a renewed inheritance of energy; all the time the kindly wind was breathing into him new power and displacing old weakness. Tarry ye until you are conscious of power—not of power only, but of

power from on high; that is, not only a certain degree of power, but a certain quality of strength; then go forth, and no man shall be able to stand against the hosts of the Lord. Oh! this neglect of the Spirit, this disregard of the Fountain of energy, this broken and hesitating companionship with the angel powers of the universe, who are waiting to nourish us and cherish us and nurse us out of our infirmity into God's own true strength. We think we are making progress when we are only going round and round in a circle. You cannot teach the right idea of progress to some persons. A man does not go across the Atlantic by walking round and round the mainmast; that is not the action which is progress; there is an action that has no forwardness in it. God Himself takes us through the right exercises and keeps us on the right line. But we cannot wait for the power. We think we have the power, and therein we become weak as other men. Where the power is really given there is no mistake about its quality. You cannot explain it; all power is a mystery, except the merely mechanical

power; but the dynamic power—the inside, or what we may term the almost spiritual power—who can understand or interpret? Yet there is no mistaking its effects; its energy is indescribable, but patent and indisputable. The Church will not wait for power; the Church wants to mechanise its own strength, to get up its own new little programme of progress: and the Lord Himself watches such poor little paper kingdoms take fire—go up into smoke, and fall back into dust. The Church of Christ to-day and every day ought to be the mightiest force in the world. It has all the elements, all the promises; it has not the faith. It proposes and compromises and begs pardon of the devil, and hopes he is not unduly inconvenienced. What becomes of such a Church? Wreck, ruin, oblivion, or contempt.

The Apostle frequently uses the words "till" and "until"; notably in 1 Corinthians xi. 26, "show the Lord's death till He come." There are so many double sentences in Holy Scripture, and so many people have never noticed them. They are too busy

with their Christmas beef to read the Word of the living God. These Biblical double sentences are great jewels, and we are not forbidden to decorate with such ornaments. Hear David, the greatest master of plaintive poetry that the world ever knew; saith he: "I shall go to him, he shall not return to me." There is the double action. I always want to reverse that sentence, that I may feel more acutely the tenderness of its meaning: "He shall not return to me, but I shall go to him." The assurance that I shall go to him makes him live in the very grave; I am moving in a curve unknown to geometry—we shall come face to face in the by-and-by. So when Paul tells me about my Lord's death he hardly gets the word out of his mouth before he says, "till He come." That is the true rhetoric, the divine eloquence, the substantial and indestructible logic. We do indeed show forth a death, but we only show it forth until it be turned into life, until it be forgotten and the grave is destined to be forgotten, and one day the new earth may not remember that ever a grave was cut in the old earth. If in that day we

should ask for reminiscences of the grave, the new earth will be stupefied by our very inquiry, it will not know what language we are speaking. Death, grave, loss, pain—is there any interpreter who will tell me, poor old earth, what these words mean? And lo, there shall be no interpreter. The language was only invented that it might be forgotten.

We are reading in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. It is more like walking through a forest than dallying in a garden. We must in many a case give up his grammar and acquaint ourselves with the music of his soul. Paul did not write much; when he did write he wrote as a blind man might be supposed to write—in large capital letters —saying, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand." Poor weak-eyed man, he could hardly see the boldest capitals which he inscribed upon his paper; and as a tired man he thought he had done more than he really had done; he thought it was a large letter because it took so much out of him. There are many standards of measurement.

This Epistle to the Ephesians must be true in its divinity because it is so palpably—and shall I say glaringly ?—true in its humanity. Where the one thing which we can test is so true, the probability is that that which is beyond the present metaphysic—that which is spiritual and transcendental—is also true. What a grasp of human nature the Apostle always has! He seems to lay a great grip upon us and explain us to ourselves. We are not dealing with a posture-master, nor are we in commerce with a man who gives small rules in etiquette and superficial interpretations in religious ceremony; we feel a great grip on the soul, and a man telling us through the ear of the body into the ear of the spirit what we are by nature, by conduct, under whose dominion we live; and we confirm his testimony, saying a great, tearful, terrible Amen. It is as thou hast spoken. What a delight it is to have confidence in the teacher! How exceedingly disquieting it is to walk through perilous places with a man who is himself afraid! His fear doubles the peril. If we were within the shadow of a great strong man—

within hearing of a man who could speak great, sure words to us—we should feel that "well begun is half done," we should make a temple of his confidence and rest in it, yea, and sometimes fall to singing as if we were the happier for the danger. It is so we feel when we are in the companionship of the Apostle Paul. His benedictions are inspirations; his instructions are battles; his battles are victories

We have come to the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter:

> "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Yet we must always be children. Children are so good that we baptize them; we receive them into our arms with this certificate, written in light and perfumed in the incense of the morning, "Of such is the kingdom of God," and we baptize them with the dew of the morning. Yet we must in another sense no longer be children, we must not tarry in the cradle; he would be a monster,

not a man, who at thirty years of age still needed to be rocked to sleep in his cradle. It is in these things that we are not to be children; not in the child-sense, the child-like sense, the little clinging, trustful, child-sense; always that; in that sense the heavens are full of cradles. To God we must always be beginning; to the Infinite we must always be little sparklets, mere specks and blossoms of things, holding within us great and solemn possibilities. In another sense we are not to be childish, foolish, receiving instruction and letting it fall out of the mind as soon as it gets into it; in that sense let us be no more children, tossed to and fro, carried about by every wind; that is the children's little game, and for children it is natural and it is pleasant. What is the child going to be? Ask the little creature to tell you on Monday what it is going to be; and the child has a Monday answer; on Tuesday, "What are you going to be?" Something other than was said on Monday. It is the privilege of little boys to be one thing one day and another another, and seven different things every week: that

is natural and beautiful; but there comes a time when all this uncertainty and movableness of mind must end—a decision must be come to, we must make an election or a choice; henceforth we must be men with a definite programme, an assured purpose, a worthy scheme of life. The mischief is that some people have no plan of existence; they live from hand to mouth, and generally at other people's expense; most of them have an idea that they could be something very great, which is a certain sign that they will never mount the ladder. The Apostle would have us fix upon a scheme, plan, or thought of life, and keep to it. Persistence is success. If you are seven different things on the seven different days of the week, what can you possibly come to? If a man shall be a lecturer, a politician, an adventurer, a painter, and a preacher, he will be a poor preacher. You cannot be all that, and a preacher. A preacher is never thrown in; he is never mixed up under the indefinite designation of an "et cetera." That is the reason why I have seen some men fail in the pulpit. They were so much more eager to get up

on Monday morning to go to the picture gallery than they were to get up on Sunday morning to go to the pulpit; they deserved to fail. That is why I have seen other men succeed with but moderate talents; they have been faithful to their call—defin iteand certain in their convictions; patiently and lovingly they have continued at their work; and patient continuance in well-doing means a diadem at the last, a "Well done" that is more golden than a golden crown. The Apostle Paul, therefore, insists that there must be a period put to childishness, and he further insists that we must begin with a meaning and work with a purpose and light our way through the wilderness with the lamp of hope.

Look what an image of human nature is given in these words—"alienated from the life of God." The whole of the eighteenth verse is a great nocturne, it is a picture struck out of a cloud, it is a statue hewn out of sevenfold midnight. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in

them." "Alienated from the life of God"—oh, how shall we represent that isolation, that desolated orphanage? Shall we imagine a tree taking its roots out of the earth and placing itself upon the face of a rock that it may have no more connection with the soil?—for the soil is full of light, the soil is full of dew; though there be no rain on the surface, there is dew at the core. We dig down to dew, and in all the strata through which we dig we are cutting sunshine to pieces; the earth is a store of morning—a gallery piled with sunshine. Shall we imagine the poor tree saying, I will have none of it, I will tear myself out of this place, and instead of seeking to plant myself in another part of the soil I will lay myself down on the rock and turn my roots to the morning sun? It cannot be; for a day or two it may seem as though it were a possibility and even a fact, but only for a day or two; the tree must be rooted in the earth as the earth is rooted in God, where all things grow harmonically, proportionately, sympathetically, and tree waves to tree as hymn might sing to hymn. There is a dread

possibility of a man taking himself out of the current of things. The soul that takes itself out of the appointed currents shall die. No institution has a right to set itself outside the law of evolution. Evolution means purpose, scheme, predestination, sovereignty of God, the outworking of a grand beneficent plan; and no man has a right to set himself outside the law and to let the law roll past him; if so, he does but make himself a nameless, hapless grave. Hence the folly of those persons who are always wanting to build themselves on a narrow interpretation of antiquity. We are thankful that "antiquity" is a word in the English language, because it has sometimes a kind of soothing and quieting effect upon a given species of mental adolescence and incompleteness. But the true antiquity is to-day; time has never been so old as it is at this moment; the hoar of the ages rested upon to-day as it was born into history. Let us, therefore, believe in spiritual evolution; let us get away from the nakedness of sin into the white linen of the saints, the purple and the true luxury of the divine sonship.

Many persons are trying to live without God; they are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. They do not know that other people are praying for them, they do not understand the philosophy of intercession. We know not who may be praying for us in the general assembly and Church of the firstborn; but we know that Jesus Christ Himself ever liveth to make intercession for us. It would be like human nature to take favours from God, and to smite the hand that gives them. There may be atheists; I never met one; I have met not a few who have professed atheism; the word was greater than their understanding of it; the little boy who carries his yard of string in his pocket really cannot, however ambitious his intention, fathom the Atlantic.

There is another expression in the eighteenth verse that is so true—"the blindness of their heart." Do not pity the blind man on the streets with his little dog and his mendicant's little tin; that is not the man to pity; the man to pity may be the man who is pitying

him; for the one man has lost only the eyes of the body, the other may be blind in his heart; he does not see moral distinctions, he does not recognise spiritual differences; he takes the right for the wrong, and the right for the left, and he goes up under the impression that he is going down, and he goes down under the impression that he is going up, and he lives in mental and moral confusion. There are moral lunatics; do not go to the lunatic asylum and say concerning the inmates, "Poor creatures! how sad to have lost reason and understanding!" It is a poor speech; the real lunatic may be outside the asylum. He is a lunatic who does not understand anything of God, truth, light, beauty, goodness. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. What if we who pity the blind and the unseen should ourselves be blind in heart and darkened in understanding? Fool! I would say to my poor soul sometimes, Thou art the blind, thou art the insane, for the King passed and thou didst not see Him; the whole universe is an argument in parable, and thou didst not understand the sun.

In the nineteenth verse there is an expression more terrible, if possible, than we have yet come upon. "Past feeling." Read the whole verse:

> "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

"Past feeling." Is not he past feeling who for thirty years has heard the Gospel preached with simplicity and pathos and power, and is to-day a worm of the earth, a groveller in the mud? "Past feeling": the spring comes without being hailed and saluted, and the summer is allowed to pass by without a smile of recognition, and the golden autumn is only regarded as a contribution to the market-place, and all the jewellery of frost and all the spotless linen of the mountain snow go for nothing, because he who was made in the image and likeness of God has lost sensibility and power of response to all poetic and ideal and spiritual appeals. On some people everything is lost; on some hearts we waste our kindness; on some lives fathers and mothers have thrown themselves away, their generous love being

regarded as a commonplace that comes without appreciation or response. It is possible to be overfed religiously; it is possible to hear too much good preaching; it is possible to hear it under the impression that it comes as a mere matter of course; not knowing that every sentence is a blood-drop, every cry of the appealing heart a loss of nervous energy. To preach to people who are "past feeling," that must be solitude and desolation and unutterable misery. Given over, given themselves over to work with greediness all manner of badness—to work with the right hand, with the left hand, and work with both the hands, and love it, and kiss it, and work it over and over again, and roll it under the tongue as a sweet morsel; and then say they have been to church. To hell!

In all this magnificent portrayal of human nature there are top-lights, half-lights, bright lights, gleaming above the brightness of the sun. For example, Paul talks about coming "unto a perfect man." He will not despair at all the rubbish which he has been

portraying and pathetically describing; he sees the possibility of growth. "A perfect man" means "a mature man," a full-grown man who has reached the highest inch of his possible stature—not a perfect man in any merely sentimental and pietistic sense, but full grown. The orchard is perfect when the apples are ready for plucking; the acres are perfect when the golden grain swings in the gentle breeze, and says without words, I am ready to be cut down and to be turned into bread.

And what a beautiful expression we find in the fifteenth verse—"speaking the truth in love": truthing it in love, doing everything in love; growing up into Him in all things in love; finding our duty in love. If we lose this power of love we cannot do any duty, we cannot be our best selves. It is motive that gives a man the true self-possession. His mere taste or his mere sense of duty might shrink from certain tasks and efforts. To mere duty the day is so long; to love, the longest day that June can show us is but a flash of light. If we go to church

because it is our duty we shall never get there; we may get there in the body, a ton weight of stupidity; but if we go because we have been hungering and thirsting after the holy exercise, we heed nor rain nor snow nor burning sun nor long distance over the city streets; we fly in great expectation and with great warmth and glow of love. It is the same with everything else; with painting, with music, with writing books, with daily drudgery, with household tasks. If we do these things when we do not want to do them we shall be burdened and utterly distressed; but if we work in the spirit of love, then let work come, and more and more of it—it does but multiply the acreage of a sunny and gladsome field. And then, in another sense, we are to be filled with a spirit of love that makes increase, love that edifies itself in love, love that doubles itself, love that says to the labourer, "I will love you still more; if you will work another hour I will bring to your hands all you want, and we will both do it together." Love building itself up in love—tautology to the grammarian, poetry to the poet.

And how is all this to be done? By being renewed in the spirit of our mind, according to verse 23. "Renewed," that is great; "in the spirit," that is great; "in the spirit of your mind"—oh, that is getting to a very inward part of the soul, piercing through fold after fold, until the light—the grace of God—gets into the very beginning of manhood and renews it. That is regeneration; not a new notion, a new opinion, a new theory in morals, in theology, in politics, in patriotism; no, but a new man. Many persons are renewed in their opinions who are not renewed in the spirit of their mind. The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, it pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and until we are cleansed in there, in that central centre, we do not know the meaning of the kingdom of God; and nothing can get in there with cleansing power but one thing—the blood of Jesus Christ. Precious Saviour, mighty Saviour, send Thy cleansing blood through the innermost currents of my heart, that I may be without

spot or wrinkle or taint or stain—holy after the quality of the divine purity!

Up to this time the Apostle has been talking great words and greater thoughts to the Ephesian Church. He has never been so verbally magnificent or so spiritually sublime. We thought, He will surely keep upon this level to the end: who can come down from the stars—from the golden clouds—to speak about common things? But the Apostle had this rare and great gift. It was never more than a step from t e sublimest contemplations to the simplest household duties, and it was never more than a step from the simplest household duties to the most magnificent spiritual conceptions that could warm the imagination and lift up the whole life of the soul to heavenly visions and celestial harmonies. We have read his grand words, let us now read some of his simpler ones.

Verse 25 startles us. We must have time to recover our breath. He addresses an exhortation to the Ephesian Church that from some aspects appears to be ridiculous. After

what we have heard of foresight, fore-ordination, calling, election, condescension, it seems to be an anticlimax to say,

> "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."

For a moment we had been lost in transcendental visions and possibilities, and suddenly we are told not to tell any more lies! Who but Paul could take such liberties, as we should deem them, with coherence and sequence and natural climacteric logic? But Paul will have his way—his soul speaks as it thinks; we hear, as it were, the very going of his soul's thought. If any preacher or teacher were to follow this course we should blame him, because we go by little logic books and rhetoric books and examples of verbal propriety; and thus we kill ourselves with wooden knives. It is very sad to shut the soul up within a cage of prescribed rules. Oh for the mountain air, for the open-air preacher, for the man on the mount that talks as the winds blow, now in breezes, in tempests always laden with fragrance from the summer

land! "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." If this were the rule of statesmanship and diplomacy and commerce, life would be ended almost abruptly. Could the world live one day if every man spake truth with his neighbour? That gun of verity would blow the fortifications of society into splinters and ashes. Does a man always speak truth to himself? That is the first great lesson in certain departments of spiritual life and education. Really and truly to tell a man what he knows himself to be, and to speak every word slowly, deliberately, and to thrust it into the soul as a naked sword—who could live? Yet how pious we are, and how exceedingly punctual and regular and methodical in all our religious habitudes! Yet possibly the most regular and the most admirable, from a mechanical point of view, may be the man who dare not look in upon himself and say to his soul, You are a villain! When man talks so he will need the Cross; so long as he tells lies to himself, what need of redeeming blood and divine priesthood? They are mistakes, exaggerations, out of keeping

with the tone of daily conduct and habitude. The Apostle gives us his reason for speaking truth to one another—"For we are members one of another"; that we belong to one another; that truth-speaking is social justice; that to be plain, candid, and straightforward is a debt we owe, and that we ought to lay down the golden words—sterling metal as it were—on the counter of righteousness. Who could live? Truly the Word of God is sharp and powerful, piercing asunder to the dividing of the joints and marrow, and to be holy is no holiday, to be holy is no matter of intellectual entertainment or frivolity; it is first of all, midst of all, last of all, self-slaughter. Where are the Christians?

Then the Apostle proceeds to give us another instruction:

> Verse 26: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

But Paul has been talking about election and fore-ordination and the glory of the Church, and the vocation wherewith the people of God are called, and he has been

almost lost in the mazes of his own ineffable eloquence; now he comes back to the common turnpike of life, and says, "When you are angry, see that you do not drive the passion of anger too far; know when to stop. Self-control is one of the highest elements in holy anger. It is right to be angry, it is right to get into a tempestuous rage in relation to evil and evil suggestion and evil approach; but when it comes to being angry as between man and man, see that you do not turn your anger into a positive luxury on your own side, revelling in your anger, and rejoicing because your passion is so hot. I repeat," the Apostle says in effect, "know just where to stop, because evil may become sin." We have read of the old teacher Pythagoras, who had a school of rhetoric, dialectic, and general disputation. All the scholars in the school, we read, used to spring at one another, so to say, and in hot dispute chase the hours of the day; but their habit was, when the shadows gathered and the school was done, to fall upon each other and with a kiss of peace and brotherhood to close the intellectual fray. This is surely a very beautiful picture! It is only Christians of a

certain type that can carry over anger until to-morrow. The only Christianity some people seem to have is the power of nursing their wrath "to keep it warm." I quote from a Scotch poet, but indeed he speaks the mother tongue of the world when he speaks so broad and true a sentiment. If you carry over your anger until to-morrow you lose your Christianity in the dark river of the night time. You must not remember yesterday's anger. And who are you, that you should keep up the anger of the world? Know, O thou foolish man! that thou thyself needest forgiveness very much. It is audacity, obstinacy—utter badness on our part—to keep up the memory and the challenge of evil. If you have done wrong to any man, say so; and in the degree in which he is a Christian man his forgiveness will be uttered before your confession is complete. But there must be confession, or there cannot be forgiveness; this is the divine plan—it is the plan of reason and sense and justice, and the only plan that can stand the strain of time.

How shall we lower ourselves to bring our

conduct under the fire of the twenty-eighth verse?

> "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

What an impossible conception! We have been told that in Christ Jesus we are called, we have been challenged, to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now this ruthless, incalculable Apostle turns round upon us and says, "Do not steal any more." What violent alternations! What a swing has this man's arm! We are on the top of the mountain, and he throws us down into the valley; he finds us in the valley, lifts us up on to the top of the mountain; he whirls us round the glowing horizon. Who can follow him? Yet there may be coherence where we little suspected it; we may need in our spiritual education just those changes to arrest our attention and to give the slowest of us something to think about. But to have an eye upon us which

sees our thieving! We do not go to church to hear moral lessons, do we? We do not go to church to have weights and scales tested? We do not go to church to have a sort of spiritual excise officer hunting up all our little methods and schemes, and following us into the cellars of our lives, that underground work and possession may be brought to a certain divine standard? We go to church to pray and sing and to be told how good we are! Paul does not minister in that church. Paul could be rich in poverty, or he would soon be a pastor without a charge; Paul could live on next to nothing if he asked a blessing upon it, otherwise what a poor congregation he would have! We do not steal! The Apostle Paul says, "Wait a moment, and be quite sure before you speak; 'stealing' is a larger word than it looks. A man who takes off five minutes from his employer's time is a thief, though he may sing many hymns and be able to find fault with the way in which other people sing them. The man that takes away five minutes from his servant's time without recognising it is a thief." Is the

law so impartial as that? Yes! that is Christianity reduced to practice. He who bears false witness against his neighbour is a thief. He who keeps back the one sweet word that would have turned a difficult message into music is a thief. The Apostle says to the vulgar thief and to the refined or intellectual thief, "Let him that stole steal no more." His eyes were evidently fastened suspiciously upon the men who made stealing a kind of livelihood. Can the Apostle, who has been speaking about election, foreordination, and all the transcendental wisdom and mystery of the kingdom of God, condescend to speak to a common thief? That is what Christianity does—that is what is done by the two commandments on which "hang all the law and the prophets." What is the thief to do? Some men seem to be born thieves. The Apostle has the answer; he says, "Let him work, let him labour." How? "With his hands." That is bringing down the instruction to a fine point. Not only "Let him labour with his hands," but, "Let him labour with his hands for a purpose, that he may have something to give

to the other man." Why, Christianity is most practical, and yet some people are leaving the Church because they want to do something that is according to their own interpretation of the term "practical"! They need not leave the Church to do that. He who keeps company with the ten commandments need not go from home to warm his hands; he who keeps within the shadow of the Cross need not go to some other camp to know the meaning of "discipline." And discipline is the proof of Christianity. Do not be confused over metaphysical terms which will be understood here and now, but enter into what is the more obviously practical gate of the kingdom, and you will find that as you work away with diligence and industrious care you will little by little get into all the metaphysics you need. Meanwhile, no lying, no thieving, but truth-speaking, hand-working; your hands were made to labour, and he is the independent man who can work with his fingers. His independence will be a small paltry god not worth worshipping; he must so labour that he can save something, and so save something

that he may have something to give away. That will keep him right by the Spirit and the grace and the blood of Christ.

> Verse 29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Keep your mouth right. Oh the blessing of a sweet breath! I speak of it in the first instance as the natural breath. It is not given to all persons. What a treasure it is to have sweet breath, balmy breath, the breath of the summer morning, the breath of the sea-breeze, the breath of singing birds! No man can ever be thankful enough for having had parents whose natural breath was sweet; it is life, it is health, it is benediction. The Apostle says, Let the soul be sweet-breathed. "Let no corrupt"—that is, "no putrid or rotten"—"communication proceed out of your mouth": your words are your soul's breath—let them be sweet, pure, healthy; let all persons who come within the range of your influence and ministry of life feel that they are in good company. You may trust your

child to the good man; the child will be the better for spending a day with the soul that is good. There is a breath that withers flowers; there is a breath that keeps them alive. Trust your girl to the man whose soul's breath is sweet. Trust your children to those schools where the atmosphere is morally pure and exhilarating. Do not listen to any man who speaks bad words in a bad breath. We thought when we began these readings that we were to walk mountains high, yea, to pass from mountain to cloud, and from cloud to star, and to know no more the language of the market-place or even the language of the common school. Yet suddenly, after having these long morning walks up in the higher air, we are brought down to the earth to love our neighbour as ourselves.

> Verses 30–32: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

"Grieve not the holy Spirit." How can

we then doubt the Trinity—the threefold, inexplicable constitution of the Godhead? The holy Spirit of God is not referred to here as an influence, an idealism, a feat of the religious imagination; you cannot grieve an influence, you cannot pierce and wound an idealism; the terms are wasted, and worse than wasted, if they do not indicate a distinct and sensitive personality. Notice the relation of the holy Spirit to the believing heart. That relation is personal; the holy Spirit has sealed the believing soul and reserved it under every manifestation and proof of security to the day of redemption. It is not only a personal relation in a general sense, but personal in an individual sense, as if each particular heart were under the special ministry and care of the Third Person of the holy and ever blessed Trinity: to which Trinity be the homage of the universe! which is the footstool of God. The peculiarity of the relationship is in the fact that He is wounded by everything in our human thought that is opposed to the quality of His own purity. He cannot live with the unholy; it is not an intellectual vexation to Him,

for who could pity with fuller sympathy and completer understanding of human infirmity?—it is a moral or spiritual grief to the Holy Ghost. If we sin we please the devil and we wound the Spirit of God. Holiness is always sensitive. Purity grows in sensitivity; what things we could once do with comparative indifference or impunity we cannot do to-day; they are the same things, but we are not the same men; we have grown to a fuller stature, we are called to the breathing of a purer atmosphere; now we see things more clearly, so that what was once, it may be, little more than trifling and hardly to be considered, is now like dust in the eyes. We feel the sinfulness of sin just in proportion as we grow in the holiness of God. It is only in that sense that we have got away from the commandments of Sinai; the commandments are still there, and still in force, clothed with all their old dignity and imperishable authority; but we have grown away from them into a more spiritual interpretation of their purpose, so that now we are in daily communion with the holy Spirit of God. The killing letter is still

there, and still there are the rocks of Sinai; but there is a spirit of holiness, purity, and appreciation of all things divinely lovely, and it is in that higher experience that we develop a keener and more responsive sensitiveness.

The thirty-first verse would seem surely to be quite superfluous when addressed to those who are believers in Christ Jesus:

> "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

These are not only elementary truths, they ought to be impossible facts. If we have seen the kingdom of God at all, and have been called within the divine circle of light and vital progress, these words of the thirty-first verse ought to be left outside as terms too vulgar and demoralised even to be permitted expression in the air that has been made balmy and blessed by psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Yet sometimes it is well for us to be reminded how small a course we have made in Christian progress; it is well that we should hear the baying of the

old cruel hounds from which we thought we had escaped; they are still within hearing distance—their names are bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and malice, and they bark and bay as if they would once more spring upon our poor lives and drag us down and devour us like spirits of fury. We are inclined falsely to measure the progress which we suppose ourselves to have made: we think, after singing holy hymn and psalm, that surely we cannot be far from the gates of heaven; we have been lifted up to transfiguration heights, we have heard in the spirit the voices of Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets, the testimonies of old history and the prophecies of the richest experience; and lo, we are offended, disappointed, insulted, and in a moment the old nature rises, and there rush up the transfiguration mount the old cruel hounds called bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and malice, and if God do not protect us we shall even yet, though we have been on Tabor's morning mountain, be devoured and destroyed by the enemy.

"Let all bitterness"—that is, sharpness, acerbity of temper, acidity, sourness—"be done away." But so unwrought is that acerbity that, if it be taken out of us, what would there be left? We are so glutted with evil things that if we give them up who could see the cellular phantom that would be left—the phantom-self, the ghost not visible? So we have to be called back again and again to be reminded that we are in the body, that we are children of dust and of time, that only by patient continuance in well-doing and earnest clinging to Christ, heart to heart, can we be lifted up into sonship and be conscious of immortality and the spirit of final triumph. It is a hard run—it is a race over rough places; our feet bleed as they run over the flinty rocks. Yet there is a voice sounding to us far away yet near at hand, saying, "Follow me; proceed, advance, never stand still"; and it is in obedience to that inspiring and exhilarating voice that we are enabled to keep going on still, saying, as the great night closes within us, "Faint, yet pursuing."

The evil things that are mentioned in verse 31 remind us of what may in some sense be still grosser things from which probably the most of nominal Christians have to a large extent escaped. Sins are distributable into two classes, and yet both the classes may be traced back to the same root. Sin is the same always, everywhere, and yet it hath a cunning of its own, a terrible deceitfulness, and a wondrous magical power of metamorphosis, so that it can change its aspect and drop its old name, and assume new titles and designations, and impersonate virtue and catch some semblance of the angels of light. We must watch it, we must beware of it; it is a cunning foe. We have got rid of its rougher aspects: are we not still under the dominion of its more spiritual potency? That is the question, and the Christian must face it, though he die in the facing of it. We have outgrown all the vulgarities of sin. We are not drunken, we are not guilty of common theft, we do not tell wilful and provable lies; when the commandment comes to us saying, "Thou shalt not kill," we answer with a kind of religious cheerfulness

that we never thought of doing so; "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and we rise in a kind of anger to repel the mean suggestion. All that looks well, but what is it under spiritual analysis? when the criticism of God is brought to bear upon it, what does it amount to? does it amount to anything more than outward respectability, social distinction as between the lowest and the highest? Is there any real religious significance and value in it? Is there not a voice penetrating the self-applauding soul, saying, "What do ye more than others? Do not even sinners the same?" Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; be ye holy as your Father in heaven is holy. Then are we no longer on Sinai? We ought to be miles higher than Sinai ever reached; it was an elementary school, it was but an alphabetic tuition; we ought to have passed into the heavenlies and the spiritualities, and to be able to interpret the commandments into their brightest significance. We have escaped drunkenness and theft and

lying and murder and adultery: are we therefore good? No, not "therefore"; unless we can go further, we may fall more disastrously backward.

What about pride, jealousy, readiness to take offence; what about evil-speaking?—these were not mentioned on Sinai. To these heights we must slowly climb, the heights where we escape all these disennobling and disastrous ministries, suggestions, and influences. Why, there are those who take a pride in pride; not knowing that they are grieving the holy Spirit of God. A man will exclaim that he is "very proud," not knowing that he is wounding the Christ—cutting the Son of God with a sharp sword. There is more said in the Bible against pride than there is said against murder; and yet people seem to imagine that they are acquiring a species of dignity by being proud! The Lord beholdeth the proud afar off; and how far off soever it may be, it is too near Him. The Lord never spake kindly to pride, the Lord never encouraged the proud heart; the self-righteous He drove out of His presence. There is no salvation for

the proud. The thief, the liar, the murderer, the adulterer, being penitent, may be saved—the proud soul never. But if it repent, then it is no longer proud; penitence is self-abasement, penitence is the throwing off of the old man with his plumed, rotten pride. Self-righteousness cannot even hear the Gospel, self-righteousness represents the deafness that never heard the brazen trumpet or the roaring thunder or any of the sounds that make up the music of the universe. Only the broken heart can hear with intelligence and profit about the Cross. To self-righteousness there is no Calvary; on the map of self-righteousness there is no place called Golgotha, nor is there a garden of Eden, nor is there a praying place. Think of it, be terrified by it; I have no comfort for the soul that dwells in the castle of its own self-approval.

What about readiness to take offence? That readiness grieves the holy Spirit of God. Who am I that I should be offended?—I who have trampled the holy Ten under my feet and grieved the holy Spirit and encouraged bitterness of feeling towards some

other poor soul, who in a moment of forgetfulness may have done me even an intentional injury. If I were really in Christ I should love him as it were even the more because he has done me that injury—"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; and to drink His blood, even in symbol, and then not to forgive those who have sinned against us, that is blasphemy. Who then can be saved? What about evil-speaking? Remember that bitterness and readiness to take offence and evil-speaking and malice belong to the more spiritual section or region of our lives. We have no bloody gully with which we have cut the throats of men, but have we not cut their hearts by bitter speeches, bitter thoughts, unholy desires? Let the butcher take his gully away—it is a symbol of the utterest vulgarity—whilst I look into my soul to find whether I have not a still bloodier weapon which is invisible and which cannot be traced to any manufacturing hand—a spirit of unforgiveness and hardness and jealousy. Am I jealous when my brother goes to an office that is higher than mine? When his book circulates more widely than mine has circulated do

I hate him and speak evil about him, and then go and drink a cup, full of redness, called "the crimson blood of Christ," and proclaim myself orthodox? Oh the shame of it! oh the hell that burns like a hot cinder in the heart of it! The magistrate cannot lay hands upon us; we do not subject ourselves to the magistrate—we only wound the Lord.

So much for the dark side of this apostolic exhortation: are there no bright spots—no lights that kindle from afar, and shed their genial, welcome radiance upon the page of life? Hear the Apostle:

> Verse 32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

We can only displace the negative by the positive. It is not enough to lay down our weapons of warfare—we must fill our hands with palms and branches and blossoms and fruits of kindness; we must not let our hands be empty—we must fill those hands with all the kindness of God; then, when the demon returns to reoccupy the hands out of which he has been cast, he will find that he cannot

return, for those same hands are full of the business of the Lord. "Tender-hearted!" sometimes the adjective weakens a word, often it splits up and dissipates the meaning of the substantive; but here is a hyphen that connects "tender" with "hearted," and the two together make up a beautiful little poem. "Tender-hearted!" feeling so sensitive as to be utterly unable to hurt another man. We often forget when we say we are very sensitive that we may be wounding the sensitiveness of another soul. He is the refined man who never remarks upon another's vulgarity, and he is the sensitive man who remembers that by a word he may hurt some soul that is groping for the light or whispering if haply the air may catch the undertone and carry it away until it swells into a spoken and a prevailing prayer. "Forgiving one another." The meaning is that we all have occasion to forgive. What man is there who liveth and sinneth not? What man is there who does not require to say almost every day to those who labour with him, "Pity me, I am weak; forgive me, I spoke in a moment of fever, and I was unjust to you; but I am sorry, pardon

me"? That is the Christian atmosphere. There are some Christians who find it almost impossible to forgive. They can persecute finely, they can stand up for orthodoxy six feet high; but to forgive—that is the supreme miracle of grace. And we, poor insect things, say we may forgive, but we cannot forget. Then you can never enter the kingdom of heaven; and do go and join the infidels—go to your own sect; do not stain the sacramental cup with lips livid with the anger of the devil. Our forgiveness will prove our orthodoxy. Some people think that Christianity is a creed, whereas it is a disposition, a temper, a condition of the soul—brokenheartedness, readiness to forgive even the most rude and callous offender.

Has the Apostle nothing but exhortation to offer us upon this point? The answer is sublime; he does not offer us exhortation, he offers us the reason which underlies all his arguments and all his appealing entreaty—"even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Thus we are called to be followers of God; thus we are summoned to follow Christ; thus we have the true standard put into our

possession by which we are to measure everything. Be ye holy, as God in Heaven; be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect. Does that mean that I am to be as holy as God in moral excellence, as perfect as God in spiritual purity? No! but it means that I am to follow on to know the Lord, to move in a certain direction, and under the impulse and sway of a certain encouragement. How is God perfect and tender and forgiving? He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil; He sends His rain and sunshine upon the just and upon the unjust; and Jesus Christ, having told us this, says, "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect"; be larger, nobler, bring in a wider circle of those who need pity and sympathy and forgiveness and assistance. Is the Lord kind? No, not kind only, but this is a word which will bear an interpreting epithet; that epithet was discovered by the sweetest of all singers—the minstrel of the ages; he spake of kindness, and went on to speak of lovingkindness—made one massive word of it. Is God merciful? Nay, more than merciful: the same great singer invented

or attached another epithet even to mercy, and he called it "tender" mercy. Thus we have lovingkindness and tender mercy, and we are called to these high attainments little by little. Not merciful with a grudge, not kind with an upbraiding, but a right royal mercy, forgiveness, and kindness: on the divine scale, and according to the divine inspiration, be ye kind, tender-hearted, helpful, forgiving; and if you ask me how—"as Christ," "as God," "as the Cross." Do not dwarf the opportunity, but enlarge it, and when thou dost forgive, have so much forgiveness left that thou couldst do it seven times again, and then seventy times seven; for thou drawest thy forgiveness from the fountain of the Cross.

CHAPTER V

Verse 1: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."

JUST like that! There is no lovelier metaphor in all this Book of parables. Why do we seek to change the figure? It means everything. If it is a cup, it is large enough to hold all the wine of God. "As"—then comes the figure. It would seem as if the parable fever warmed all the writers of the New Testament. The kingdom of God is like unto ——; the kingdom of heaven is as ——; be ye therefore followers as ——. It is always like something else, and that something else is always so clear and so beautiful that a child may see it. Yet how often have we made confusion of the beautiful; how often have we painted it as if we were expressing some resentment against its purpose! When all is so clear, why this love

of blurring and confusion and intermixing, so that the soul misses all that is nutritious in the holy feast? As children, as dear children, as little children—how much further will he carry the figure? He is already touching the living nerve, his fingers are on the chords that thrill with divinest music of response. That is what he means to do—that is what he means to be. But this would drive away so many. No doubt; it would drive away all the wise and intellectually proud and self-conceited, and people who through so-called "culture" are finding their way to the devil. Nothing has kept so many people out of heaven as so-called "culture." I never heard a little child use that word; I do not think any little child ever heard it so as to remember it; no little child could spell it—no little child wants to spell it. We are not saved by philosophy, by culture, by erudition, by grammar, by high intellectual feats, and by marvellous ability in the guessing of conundrums; that is not the gate that opens on the kingdom of light and loveliness. "As children": is there no welcome to philosophers? None. Is there no gate for the learned men? None.

Philosophy and learning are not condemned, but they are put in their right places; that is all. It is not the philosopher that is saved, but the sinner; not the man of learning, but the man of broken-heartedness. One of the last books that John Bunyan thought of printing bore the title "The Excellence of the Broken Heart." What a philosophy—without the name, the pretence, or the miserableness of it! It is the broken heart that finds the gate of the kingdom; it is the broken heart that alone can read the Bible and understand the words of Jesus; it is the heart that has renounced itself that can find room in the chamber of its love in which to entertain the Son of God. What a great burning of books there would be! Certainly; whole libraries would be set ablaze at once, and no wise soul would stir a finger to put the fire out. We must get back to little children, dear children; we must become converted, and become as little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven. We are sometimes permitted to use the word "man" or "men," but always in a sense that is perfectly consistent with the idea of dear

children, little children. For what is the oldest of us but a life new burning—a life just arrived from the other side of things; a new interpretation of the light and the beauty of the further house which is the house of the Father? There are no old men except according to the calendars which we ourselves have made. We are great calendar makers; we make almanacs, and age ourselves according to their mean lines. We have no business with such poor literature. We come up with God, we were in His thought from the beginning, we engage His solicitude and His love every moment of our breathing. But man laughs at the ridiculous notion. The oak under which he will be buried is centuries older than he was when he breathed his last upon the earth. What, therefore, we have to cultivate is the child-heart. If we have the child-heart we can read the Bible with great edification and profit. One of the first things we shall know is that God cannot be known. There is no need to know Him here and now; but we see Jesus—we know God's Son—and His Son is the express image of His person; and Jesus Christ says, "He that hath seen Me

hath seen the Father." That is His condescending way of telling us that if we understand anything that Jesus says we understand just so much about God; for God speaks through His Son, and the words of His Son are written, and we know that they are the Son's words because they cut us in pieces, they discipline—torture us—stretch us on a cross; therefore they are Christ's words. Yet there be poor men who examine, collate, and compare divers manuscripts and dates and ages, to see if they can confirm the words. God send that they would accept the discipline, and then they would know whose words they are. No man ever sought to call human nature to God through such a gate as this—through such a process as this—that tears the joints, cuts the heart, pierces to the marrow, and has a calendar of discipline for every moment of the day. I need no literary proofs of my Lord's words; I know they could not have come from man—I know that no devil ever thought of testing the heart with severest suffering; I feel that the discipline of Christ is the proof of Christianity.

If we could but be little children we should

soon obey the exhortation of the Apostle, "Be ye therefore followers of God." The literal word is, Be ye therefore imitators, copyists of God; that is to say, being Christianized, Put your feet into the footprints of Jesus Christ—now a short step, now a long one; now up the hill, now through the thorny places, now down the hill—which is another way of saying "up the hill"; for to go down the hill of time in the right spirit and in the right temper and at the right time is to go up the hill of eternity; the palace road, where the King's house is at the top. Children imitate, children write upon pencil lines, children cannot trust themselves to write without the little railways cut upon the paper by a mother's tender hand with a well-sharpened pencil; then the little scribe comes and writes between the lines. The little scribe does more than that; the little scribe first writes with a pencil, and through many a blunder stumbles upon the right thing at the last; and then, having done all the pencil work, it takes up the pen and the ink and runs great danger of making such sad blotting when it begins to copy from the pencil in ink.

Be ye imitators; do not imagine that you can be great, fluent scribes all at once, writing the literature with a free, expert hand. Some of us have got the letter in our minds, and some of us have got it in pencil; but we dare not just yet begin the ink work, for where there is ink there is danger until the mother draws the lines. And then with what infinite pains and labour we copy the thing, and how ashamed we are when we spell badly—when we spell Heaven without an H—and when we have twice written a letter that should only have been written once; and then sometimes we take the ink copy away and begin another copy and write it without error in spelling or in shape of letters. Who will despise it? What man will frown upon it? Not one; neither will your Father which is in heaven frown upon your poor writing and poor spelling and poor grammar. He does not want either the writing or the spelling, either the grammar or the composition; He wants the meaning of the soul—He wants to know what your little child-heart would be at. That is satisfaction; herein is our Father pleased by the child-likeness and the tenderness, the

simplicity and the trustfulness of our young hearts.

> Verse 2: "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

What a wondrous expression of the Christian character! What power of encouragement the Apostle had! If he had medicine to administer, how he capsuled the pill! When he wanted to say something severe, how he approached us first along the line of recognition and appreciation! After these tender words, I know Paul's spirit and method so well, I believe he is going to say something morally severe. This is the Pauline way. At present I am not supposed to know what he is going to say, but I never heard him talk like this without his presently saying something that will remind us that we are but men. In the meantime here is the godly and encouraging exhortation, "Walk in love." You will never regret having loved one another. I have been present at the closing scene of many a life; I never knew any one say,

"I am sorry I did that good deed; I regret my charitableness and magnanimity and forgiveness; I deplore the fact that I was once kind even to an ungrateful man." That is not the talk of the dying; that is not the talk of a true, healthy, noble piety. When we come to die, the things we regret are: our harsh words, severe dealings, sharp practices, cruel misinterpretations of other men's expressions. What a dying is that! —that is the second death! The Apostle is going to say something morally severe; I feel quite sure of it, as experienced sailors know that there is an iceberg somewhere by a sudden chill of the air. Meanwhile, he is most gracious: "walk in love," and if you would know what I mean by walking in love I simply mean, Be Christlike; do in your degree what Jesus Christ did in His degree. He loved us, He gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. Brethren, keep near the Christ; do as nearly as possible what He did. Did ever a man come to Jesus and say, "Lord, I repent," and Jesus Christ turn him away? Never;

then He would have gone back upon His own words, He would have stultified Himself in His own temple, in the very presence of His own altar: for He said, "If thy brother trespass against thee and turn again, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him without a grudge—without a reservation; and if he be a hypocrite, let his hypocrisy be his own responsibility; be thou true to the great sovereign law of causing forgiveness to follow penitence." Be, then, as nearly as possible, just what Jesus Christ was. While we were yet sinners He died for us; the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. We have the great Gospel offer made to us, and the great Gospel example set before us, and we are called upon to follow the Lord in all the way at whatever cost. This is not a popular way; this is not the tone of a demagogue; this Man has no acres to promise, and no fine habitations to offer. He says, "Come; whosoever cometh after Me, let him take up his cross." Thus are we to be made known to men; that is to say, as crossbearers, as men who are marked with

a severe stigma, as men who carry the brand of Christ, as it were, in our very flesh. So to say, we shall be written all over with some kind of wound, so that men may know that we have been with Jesus, and have not only learned of Him, but have suffered with Him. Who, then, can be Christians? None; there is no Christian, if we come to these deeper interpretations and more spiritual tests; but forward amongst the hosts is one whose holy words are full of cheer: "I count not myself to have attained"—that is right—"but I follow after"—that is right—"I follow on"—that is right. Many, many thousands—millions—are striving after Christ, desiring and panting to be like God, and their shortcomings shall not be reckoned against them, because, though faint, they are pursuing, and though not having yet attained, they are striving after the great heights. Do not let us therefore judge one another severely. Many a man may have more Christianity in his failure than many another man in his apparent success. The nearer we come to Christ the farther we shall sometimes follow Him. We fall short of Him; the colour is

changing, the light is changing, the very standard within our own souls is changing, so that what we thought good yesterday we despise to-day, and we are hurt by yesterday's poor virtue. Grow in grace, and by so growing you will come to hate the self of which you were once proud.

I dare not read aloud what the Apostle now says. I knew it was coming—I was sure of it. We must print verses 3, 4, 5, and let men read them in the secrecy of solitude—a solitude that is red with shame.

> "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

This brings us to one of the great alternations which mark the progress of the epistle. We are here and there in this epistle predestinated into the adoption of children chosen before the foundation of the world; we are redeemed by blood; we have received the franchise of pardon; we have

been dazzled by the riches of His grace. Now the Apostle says to us, "Watch your lips, that evil words may not pour their poisoned liquid over your faces. There are some things you must not name; you must not know the meaning of some words; you must carefully choose the characters with whom you associate; and if a bad man shall speak a bad language, you are to look at him as a child might look who had never heard unholy words in his father's house. The bad men are skilful speakers, they are fluent in the use of vain words—be not ye therefore partakers with them; ye were sometime darkness, but things have changed, you are now light in the Lord, and you must walk as children of light, and you must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; you must by your very silence and the very significance of your look reprove them, and give the bad man to feel that he is in the presence of one who silently judges him and pierces him with the sharp judgment of God." I knew this exhortation was coming; we were strengthened for it; we were encouraged to believe, that we might be dear

children of God and that we might be imitators of our Father in heaven. Then the Apostle, knowing the atmosphere of this earthly life, said, as it were in another tone —as if he had been talking instead of writing, and probably his tone changed in the act of dictating the epistle—he said, "But—but—but; there is another side. You are still in the world, and you will hear such words as 'uncleanness,' 'filthiness,' 'foolish talking,' 'whoremonger,' 'unclean person': get back into the child state and the child heart and the home language and the better grammar—get away from this devil's prose into God's celestial poetry." He warns the Gentile converts against foolish talking and jesting—words that are often misunderstood. He is referring to that spirit which would make a jest of God; he is not referring to vivacious conversation, kindly and innocent banter even, but to that kind of jesting that would joke at the altar, that miserable sort of jesting that would take the cup of sacrament and before partaking of it mock its red contents. That is what the Apostle meant when he wrote to the Corinthians

about no man drinking the cup unworthily; not the man being unworthy, for every man is unworthy in the sight of God, but drinking it in an unworthy spirit, drinking it under a false interpretation of its meaning—turning a sacrament into drunkenness and rioting. And so he says, "Where irreverence comes in piety is impossible; where men make a mock at sin there is no salvation for them until they repent of that folly." How easy to mock the piety of others! Let not young Christians be dismayed because they are laughed at. A most beautiful thing occurred but the other day, when certain vagabonds, outlanders, were associated with a section of the loyal Dutch. The loyal Dutch were Bible-readers, and the vagabond outlanders mocked their hymn-singing and their Bible-reading, and to prevent further friction the loyal Dutch Bible-readers were taken away or went away, saying as they went, "We are Bible-readers, and God will punish you for your folly." And these men were punished that same night, and deserved to be. When men can mock Bible-reading they cannot win battles; when men give up the Sabbath Day

they cannot be victorious soldiers. You cannot give up the Creator and be great men, great painters, musicians, authors, leaders; you cannot. The man who reads his Bible in the Biblical spirit and loves it will win every battle. Thank God! And the jesters and the mockers and the banterers and those who offer their vulgar, luxurious jest at the men of God, they shall go down. May no stone mark the sepulchre of such dogs!

> Verses 8–18: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

Observe the striking series of contrasts in this marvellous passage. Let us trace the

series, and learn what we can from these contrastive pictures. The first is in the eighth verse. This word "darkness" is not indicative of mere dim or transient fog or inconvenient grading of light; it is a deeper, severer, ghastlier word. "Ye were sometimes darkness"—not dark, but darkness itself, sevenfold night—yea, more than night ever was; for surely every night must have somewhere and somehow its relieving star. It was not so with you in your former state; you were living darkness, without ray or glint or beam of light, as far away from light as it is possible to be. That is a wonderful conception of human nature and of human condition before the Father of lights. You were not merely broken lights, scattered beams that it was impossible to put together; there was no beam in you, you had never been illumined, you had never been warmed, you had never even heard of the summer of holiness—you were simply incarnate, embodied darkness. Who could call us out of that state? What matchmaker could strike a little flash that would drive away such gloom? Where the darkness is so dense God

Himself must handle the occasion, or there is nothing for it but fatal night. Sometimes we have said of a great singer, "He is not musical, he is music"—that is to say, he is not a merely mechanical player, a man who has got into his memory what is written in a book, but the music is in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting melody. So, reversing the picture, the Gentiles were not dark, they were darkness—unpenetrated, and but for the divine mercy, impenetrable clouds. Occasionally we say of a man, "He is not eloquent, he is eloquence—embodied, incarnate, breathing, walking, living eloquence; he has not learned something by rote, he has not recited something of which his memory is in charge, but the holy gift is moving in him like a spirit, a genius, a heavenly choir." Reverse the picture, and you have the Apostle's idea. You were not dark, you were darkness—the thing itself, sevenfold night; no imagination could conceive the intensity of the darkness of your condition.

Then the contrastive "but"—"but now . . . light"; not partial light, not a grey light, not a mere hint of light, but as truly as

you were once darkness, so truly are you now light. "Walk as children of light." The miracle is as great on the one side as on the other. Chaos was not partial chaos; chaos was not a mere mood or transient phase of disorder; it was utter confusion, without date, without measure, without figure, a tumultuousness and disorderliness not to be spoken of in words in any adequate sense or with any adequate fitness. Chaos is not partly order and partly confusion; the old chaos on which the Holy Spirit brooded was utter chaos, shapelessness, amorphousness, that which could not be ruled into order by any skill created; but now, since the beginning, chaos has given place to order, proportion, music, perspective, and all the apocalypse and summer of colour. That is the difference. Chaos has no history. People want to know when the creation began. They can never know it. All depends upon what you mean by creation. The thing upon which creation operated may be calculable, but the thing out of which creation took its materials may lie back, so to say, in the memory of God alone. Transfer the figure to the Christian life, and then you have first

the darkness—utter, dense darkness, on which moon and star never shone, not to speak of dawning light and wakening morning; then you have light, glory, midday—points of extreme. Unless we recognise the extremity of the points we shall lose the whole movement of the miracle. Let us keep our memories well refreshed with the fact that once we were darkness; let us pity those who are in darkness still. Do not imagine for a moment that the man on the street can come into the sanctuary of God and partake of it and be as one of the called saints of heaven all in a moment. He cannot; nor can he hear the Gospel, much less understand it. He is in darkness. A great mystery of movement must take place in his soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. We want again Genesis, first chapter and first few verses; we want especially the Spirit brooding over the infinite night, the infinite disorder, with a view to having brought out of it proportion and harmony and rest.

As to these workers of darkness, verse 11 lays down the instruction succinctly and unmistakably: "Have no fellowship." Do we

rest there? No; we come upon this remarkable "but," which recurs in the passage quite startlingly: "but rather reprove them." Do you mean rebuke them? No. Do you mean disallow them, or look unfavourably upon them, or look askance at them? No; all that, all that and something more: Convict them. The Holy Ghost shall reprove the world of sin, convict the world of sin. Do not hold any conversation with the unfruitful works of darkness; have nothing to do with them; repel them when they come near you, shrink away from them as if some horrible plague were in the air, and you were afraid of being blighted by the fatal pestilence. Now we have escaped all that, and we have come to the age of toleration, and we call toleration charity, and thus we unwed that holy bride, and tear her away from righteousness and justice, and drive her out into the wilderness to talk an alien tongue. We have now great toleration for people who are of a contrary persuasion to our own; we compromise with the works of darkness; the day says to the night, "Let us say no more about our differences, but let us compromise in a neutral tint

or tone of colour, and let us lay down the noble democratic doctrine that one thing is as good as another in its own sphere, and if taken in its own atmosphere and in its proper relationships to the universe at large." So we are feeble, we are a school of cripples, we are a home of incurables; we have lost the nerve, the muscle, the tremendous energy that moved the world some centuries ago. We now live comfortably with all our opponents, and with regard to divers social practices we have compromised upon them; we come to church in the morning, and receive our friends in the afternoon, and slander the absentees over the cup which cheers but not inebriates. We used to go to church twice a day; now it is enough to get it over in the morning as early as possible, and then have the whole day—mayhap for "the unfruitful works of darkness." Have we lost the sharpness of division? I am not now speaking about differences of opinion; opinion goes a short way in this great difference. This is not a matter of intellectual pedantry or ecclesiastical persuasion as to this form or that form—questions upon which men may

honestly or even profitably differ. I am speaking about moral antagonisms, about God and the devil; and they cannot compromise. We belong to one or the other, we cannot serve God and Mammon—not the "cannot" of inconvenience, but the "cannot" of a transcendental necessity; the thing cannot be done. The Apostle Paul operated upon this grand doctrine of separation: "Come out from among them," said he, "and be ye separate"; and he said he was speaking the word of the Lord; for what fellowship hath light with darkness? So he is consistent with himself in writing to the Ephesians and the Corinthians. Division, separation of a moral and spiritual kind, leaving all our necessary and not wholly unhappy differences of mere opinion to settle themselves; but the moral and immoral cannot sign the same document; they do not serve the same king; their souls are different; they are irreconcilable.

Then in verse 15 he says, "not as fools," then the inevitable "but." What a series of "not" and "but"! "Not as fools, but as wise." "Fools" is a word of many meanings in the Scripture: senseless, nousless, having no

shrewdness of mind, having no moral sensitiveness, confusing things that differ, making mistakes and thinking nothing of them, as to their moral value and their relationship to the remaining links and duties of life. Sometimes the "fool" means the withered heart; the intellect is there, sharp enough, shrewd enough, trying to live upon its own problems and its own rude guesses at life's conundrums; but the heart is gone. It has faded like a leaf; it has withered like a leaf that falls from a branch that seems to shake it down with contempt. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God": not the intellectual fool, but the withered heart, the heart that is desiccated, juiceless, pithless, that which is leather which was once flesh—the heart in its withered late autumnal days says, "There is no God." And to the withered heart what God can there be? Is not the heart the man at his best? Does it not mean not only sensibility, but tenderness and sympathy and all the words that belong to the line of high sentiment? Is not the heart the home of the man, the innermost sanctuary and altar of the soul? The heart sees, the

heart becomes the noblest intellect; the heart under the right conditions will see more of God than the mere brain can ever see. Hear this word that comes through all the winds that blow through the ages, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." And sometimes the heart is the whole man; it is so in the first and great commandment of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy spirit"—with all thy mind: the heart will recover the brain; the heart will go out after the prodigal intellect and bring it back. Some may only be doubters intellectually; they are not doubters, but believers in the great necessities and sorest agonies of life. Then they suddenly change their creed, and remember that away down in the heart's deepest places there lives not a creed, but a faith, a creating, redeeming God-appropriating faith, which is itself the very creation of divine grace.

Yet again, in verse 17, "not unwise," then the inevitable "but"—"but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Getting at the very centre of things; not living the

little superficial life, but connecting the mind and the heart with the upper fountains and the ever-springing wells of the divine conception and the divine purpose. "Not unwise"; living from day to day; not seeing the connection of things, and not noticing that an increasing purpose runs through all the process of suns and stars, of all bodies solar, geologic, and other; not knowing that the whole conception is in the grip of God, that the Lord reigneth, that the fog is but for a moment, that the blue light of the everlasting morning will come, and in its glory we shall forget the night and cease to remember that we were once troubled by a cloud.

To what a great character does the Apostle call us in setting before us this series of *not* and *but*! He is talking as only a great spiritual statesman can talk. A passage like this is a great educational lesson to the soul. Everything is balanced, mutually related, and impregnated by the very spirit of humanity and of divinest love. To have read such a passage is to have incurred a great responsibility; how much greater does that responsibility become when we read the concluding

or climacteric "not" and "but" in the eighteenth verse!—"not drunk with wine . . . but"—the same style of argument—"filled with the Spirit": drunk with the Spirit, intoxicated and made enthusiastic by divine possession and inspiration. What insight into human nature! "Be not filled with wine, drunk with wine, wherein is excess." Upon that excess we soon come. First there is exhilaration, and then there is a higher degree of buoyancy, and then there is a taste of bitterness, and then there is a sense of surfeit, and then a sense of revulsion, and an act of revulsion: you have reached the limit of the wine; wine can go so far and no farther. But as to the Holy Spirit, be drunk with that Spirit, that holy wine; be intoxicated and transported by that high revelry and that noblest ecstasy, in which there is no satiety, no excess, no surfeit; for the mind grows by what it feeds on, and our capacity to receive the Spirit enlarges as we bid Him welcome to the hospitality of our love. There is a whole volume of philosophy in that eighteenth verse. All limited things will surfeit you, only the infinite will never cloy you.

Why? Because you yourselves are meant to be immortal—you are intended to live with God, and in that life there is no monotony, no sense of weariness, but as we company with Christ we increase in desire to have further association still. I speak concerning Christ and His Church; no man can enter into this mystery but the man who lives and moves and has his being in God. He is never alone, he is never satiated; why, the water of Jacob's well would not be enough for him —he would drink of it and thirst again; but he who drinks of the water that Jesus Christ gives, he who drinks of the Holy Spirit, shall never thirst, and never know the meaning of satiety, but will evermore call upon the Lord to increase his faith that he may at once increase his service and his joy.

These are wonderful contrasts. Now we must go back a little upon our track here and there to pick out some peculiar words that seem to fit this mechanism of expression with exquisite adaptation. To quote a few of these remarkable words. Verse 9, "The fruit of the Spirit"—better translated, as it is in the Revised Version, "The fruit of light." "Walk

as children of light," we read in verse 8; in verse 9 the Apostle adopts a connective or logical word, and says, "For (because) the fruit of light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; showing us what is acceptable unto the Lord." There is no more any darkness. The apple-trees will not respond to great masses of gloom and cloud; there is no heroic little bird blithe enough to face the overpowering fog with even one little cheery note; no daisy or violet will come out to see the fog. But light makes all things come out—you cannot stop at home when it is light; light scatters and yet unites; light creates at once a common joy and a common sympathy, and people who never saw one another before are almost inclined to speak when the sun is doing its very best to make the earth merry and glad, as with a new song. So long as we remain in darkness we shall bear no fruit; when we come out by the power of the Spirit into light there will be bud and blossom and shaking fruit. May no blight or cruel wind from the east discourage such buddings and outbursts of the vernal juice!

And then we read in the eleventh verse of "the unfruitful works of darkness." What did they all come to? When we were really bad men what did it come to when it was all totalled up in results? What did it come to? To loss of virility, to loss of reason, to paralysis of will, to the divestment of our best nature; it came to fear and trembling and self-accusation and beasthood—that is what it came to. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" The bad man gets nothing. He thinks he makes a good bargain; he utters the fool's laugh at the devil's counter; and says what a wonderful arrangement he has made. And then come disappointment, social distrust, newspaper reports, halings before the courts; and then there may come more wine, a deeper draught of the devil's fluid to drown the devil's accusations; and then, when it is all added up, what does it come to? what is the bill? Hell!

The Apostle urges us to walk as children of light, making his argument, in verse 13, run according to this line, "whatsoever doth make manifest is light," and light in three

points, light almost in three qualities: light at the centre, which illumines the whole man; light that discovers, throws itself upon objects and discovers them. The sun discovers, not creates, the dust. You think the room has been well cared for; so it may have been: will you draw up the blind and let the sun be critic? And when he comes in with those eyes of light you are ashamed of the very room you were proud of an hour ago. And then there is a light that reflects—the mirror light, that throws back, so that you can see yourself in the light and abhor yourself, never before having seen your disfigurement and your unworthiness and your utter decrepitude and miserable infirmity.

The Apostle gives the Ephesians a new word in verse 15: "See that ye walk circumspectly." It is a hard world to walk in at all. We need to have eyes in front and eyes behind and eyes on either side of us; because the enemy is watching us, and we are walking along a very narrow wall. On the top of that wall are sharp points of glass made as if in the cement, and we must walk very carefully or we shall be undone. We walk along a

very narrow precipice, we cannot turn round to speak to a companion or fellow-traveller; we say we must be perfectly silent till we get across this difficult place. Before you start on the journey look well round, be circumspect—roundabout-lookers—exactly to see where you are and to what point you are moving. Do not live the careless life or the rootless life or the planless life, taking things just as they come and being unwise, and foolish with exceeding folly; but enter into calculation, relate one thing to another, and be wise in the Spirit of God, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly that you may know how to answer the enemy, how to light a glory in the darkness, how to sing a song in the wilderness.

"Redeeming the time." The day of the Lord was always coming to Paul; the day of the Lord is always coming to us. We are to walk and work, to serve, to suffer, as if the day of the Lord would be to-morrow. He indicated a grand policy. He did not execute an arithmetical exercise; he did not sit beside the ticking pendulum and say, "Tell me when the Lord will come." To that have we brought

our studies of the Scripture! whereas the Apostle indicates a grand policy. This was a favourite philosophy of his, to get hold of the policy, and let the details relate themselves to it; and part of the Pauline policy was this, that the Lord may be expected at any moment. And there is no other wise way of living. Ye know not the hour that ye may know it: not to know it is to expect it, not to know it is to be solemnised by it. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," said He who began to preach, and then finished by dying that He might afterwards rise from the dead and show how near His kingdom is. But so slow of heart are we that we want to know days and hours; we have our slate and our pencil, and if a prophet but drop a word that is arithmetical, we take him down in a moment, and if an apostle should indicate anything like a day, we begin to calculate and put another figure to it. By figures you can prove everything; by figures you can prove nothing. It is very sad indeed that men who have slates and pencils gave many of us a sleepless week this month by looking for meteors that never came, so far as I am

aware. Personally, I did not care whether they came or not, but there was a great inroad made upon my sleep. They might be there, and I ought to rise and see if they had come after all. Better redeem the time, better turn the sunshine into labour, better serve the Lord with simplicity and honesty and godly fear, and then we shall be ready for Him when He does come. Convinced am I that this is a policy of the Apostle, and not the indication of an arithmetical expectation. "Ye know not what hour your Lord cometh." Christ Himself said so. "What I say unto one I say unto all, Watch." The kingdom of heaven comes every moment to the man who wants it, and asks to see in the coming of his Lord the way to a new opportunity, to suffer bravely, to work wisely, and to serve with the gratitude and the grace of a spiritual obedience.

> Verses 19, 20: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Live the thankful life. Let us have no

more groaning and complaining, but let us have music and psalm and hymn and spiritual song, an inward and outward melody. The Church has forgotten all its exhortations to thankfulness and to music; it has made for itself a series of threnodies very depressing and soul-enslaving, services and tests of discipline and standards of heartless and often hypocritical solemnity. The Apostle says, "Let us have no more of this; there is a sunny side even to Christian faith; there are whole days, long bright summer days, in which it becomes us to sing one to another in psalm and hymn and spiritual song, and to match the summer with a human melody." We are not the more pious because we are so depressed; melancholy is not one of the evidences of the Christian faith—as well refer to death in proof that we are members of the kingdom of heaven. We have nothing to do with death—it is abolished, sponged out; our subject is the resurrection. When the Church is more cheerful it will depose the world from many a position of social charm and fascination to which it has no right whatsoever. Do we contribute towards a cheerful Church?

Did you ever know any church that was really rationally and consistently vivacious and triumphant because of the nearness of the Saviour and because the air was made balmy by His presence and blessing? Let a cheerful life be added to the evidences of the truth of the Christian religion. Paul was never ashamed of his overflowings of joy; he mingled the cup of life so dexterously and with so sweet and sacred a cunning that no man ever drank such a cup as Paul drank. He said, "Yea, we glory in tribulations also." Nothing could repress him or depress him; his religion forced its way through fog and smoke and storm and pain and loss; he took tribulation with a strong man's hand, and added it to his wealth. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Always hear the music that is in everything. There is fire in ice. There is music in silence; there is music in the radiance of the face. Music is not a noise; music is an expression, a spiritual emphasis, a force within which makes all outward things palpitate as if in obedience to some fascinating charm. It would be better for us to have psalm and

hymn and spiritual song than to have groaning and unbelief and fear and timidity. The heart should be so full of music as to leave no room for the devil. What the Apostle cautioned the Romans against was a void mind—a mind empty, idle, and either having nothing to do or being unwilling to do anything; that is the devil's chance! We hear a good deal about our temptations and difficulties and struggles. Silence! We want to hear something now about the psalm and hymn and spiritual song, and the triumph and domination in the infinite strength of the infinite grace. We are cautioned not to give way to depressing influences. Our singing spiritually with the right fervour and emphasis will keep the devil at bay. He hates all singing hearts; music tortures the damned spirit. If you had more music you would have less fear. Not mechanical music, not something that can be taught at a certain number of pence per half-hour—that is not the music meant by the Apostle Paul; it is melody in the heart, it is the whole life itself turned to music. The devil does not get very near to the heart that lives in real thankfulness and

in spiritual melody. When we live in argument, he asks us questions; when we try to sustain the soul on controversy, he puts before us in a most skilful, almost professorial manner the heresies of old centuries, and asks us what we make of them; as if long ago we had not buried them, and lost them, and cursed them! You never should attempt to make an ancient heresy a modern difficulty. There are many temptations to depression. Some of those temptations arise from physical constitution. Some persons never can be otherwise than depressed; other persons would really be unhappy if they had no depression—they would wonder what had taken place if they felt a little better one morning. These are not our living epistles and letters of commendation. At the same time we are called upon to be patient with people who are constitutionally melancholy. We should never marry them; we should live as little as possible with them; but with these two reservations we should be as kind as we can be to them.

If we have had our psalm and hymn and

spiritual song, what then, thou great disciplinarian of the Church? "I will tell you," says Paul, "after the song must come the discipline." You will find all along the Christian line that song and discipline alternate—they seem to balance one another; in that, as in the record of Genesis, the evening balances the morning, and the evening and the morning are the whole day. Discipline succeeds melody:

> Verses 21, 22: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

We shall miss the whole point of this if we take it out of its connection and make a jest of it. There are no jests in the Bible. The buffoon can find them on the altar, almost on the Cross, but the wise man finds no such thing. Observe the atmosphere in which the Apostle is now writing; take note of the atmosphere which he has created around these Gentile converts. Do not place the Ephesian converts on a level with Christian and experienced nations. When the temperature is at the highest, when joy is at the zenith,

when all the summer fruits are growing and all the summer birds are singing, he says, "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God." And in that atmosphere it is easy to do so; in any other atmosphere it is impossible. That is the exposition. Where the atmosphere is right there will be no difficulty. What a cunning master of fence was this great brother of ours, the leader of the Christian host! Said he, "Submitting yourselves one to another." That is the key of all that follows. The submission is never to be on one side only; and where there is submission on both sides there is no humiliation, there is sympathy, there is union. Everything depends upon the point at which we approach difficult subjects or severe trials. The difficulty is not so much in the thing itself as in the point from which we proceed towards it and the atmosphere with which we invest it. All things are affected by atmosphere. It is the atmosphere that makes the beauty of the summer day. The sun would be but a clumsy artist painting in white too dazzling if he had not the help of atmosphere; that is where he gets his pictures. And yet we call him the

great artist. In a sense he is the great artist, but he has wonderful appliances. God has given to him very great assistances and auxiliaries; he would be but a poor, glaring, white-faced thing, a merely frightsome thing, in yonder courts of his, if he were not attempered and coloured and toned by that which no man ever saw, the air, the atmosphere, the mysterious something that clothes the earth like a garment, a garment invisible and yet full of a strange mystic colour.

For example, many persons are broken down in mid-life and made cripples of for the rest of their days because of the great difficulty about the miracles. There is no difficulty about the miracles. Yet you were broken down at thirty-five, and have never been yourself since, because some fool of a man suggested to you the difficulty of Jesus Christ walking on the sea, and raising the dead, and giving sight to the blind. That man made you a sort of initial, elementary, and most infantile infidel some thirty years ago. Would God some nobler spirit had been within your calling! The miracles; what are they? Everything depends upon the

point of view from which they are surveyed, or the point in their own circumference at which they are broken in upon. Here and elsewhere the question is largely one of spiritual atmosphere. A poor little urchin brought up in a very depressing village, reared in a room seven feet by six, with a window in it so high that he was never able to look out of it, is brought up to see some great city; and how affrighted he is, how terrorstruck, how amazed! How will he ever get back again? Here is a youth brought up in a large city, educated upon a liberal scale, companying with persons of culture and travel and large information. How does he regard the city—even the city of London? Without fear; with appreciation. He has come down upon it from a high point; the other visitor struggled up to it from the lowest possible point. Do these people view the city in the same light, and estimate it at the same value? Certainly not. They are two different people; they approach it from two totally different points of view. So if I come down from long companying with the Saviour in heaven;

if I have spent with Him forty days and forty nights; if we have held long, sweet, deep, vital intercourse, I come down upon the world, and it is but a pebble-life; I come down upon its wonders, and do not consider them worth looking at. I have been with the Lord, and everything else must be mean, small, contemptible. If I have made myself, by grace and the holy action of the blessed Spirit, familiar with the purposes of Christ, I shall approach the miracles of Christ as very little things, as He Himself approached them. They were never great efforts to Jesus Christ; He came from eternity, and time can never be great to immortality. Jesus Christ said concerning His miracles, in addressing His disciples, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto the Father: the farther I am from you, the nearer I am to you; the leverage will be greater; all the apparatus and appliances, spiritual and metaphysical, will be more immediately under My command; I go that I may come; I vanish that I may be seen by the heart."

So with this matter of submission. "Sub-

mitting yourselves one to another." A man takes refuge in his vanity, in self-exaggeration, in overweening and overwhelming self-importance. How do you account for that? Because he has come from a low communion. He has struggled up to this position; he has not come down upon it, as an eagle might alight upon a rock; so he asks why he should submit—*he!* Was ever little pronoun so loaded with false emphasis, so crushed by misinterpretation? He—a candle that wind can blow out; he—a leaf that will fall with the winter wind blowing upon it; he—whose breath is in his nostrils; he—upon whose brain a cloud may descend at any moment, and he will grope at midday as if it were sevenfold night! He must approach himself from the right standpoint, he must come to himself from communion with God, and then he will understand what Jesus, the ever-blessed One, meant when He said, "He that is greatest amongst you, let him be the servant of all." That is submission. Service is submission—help given to others out of a generous, because regenerated, heart is the sign and is the seal of a

genuine submission. What is this wonderful submission? It is two persons doing the same thing at the same time to one another. Where is the submission? These acts are not consequent one upon another; they are concurrent. You bowed just as I was bowing, I submitted just as you submitted, and the finest mechanical or mathematical instrument ever discovered could not mark the point of coincidence. That is submission. There is nothing here of some high and mighty one waiting until some lowly and inferior one kisses his boots; there is no act of condescension on the part of some foolish person who does not understand himself or understand the discipline of life; there is no knavish trick in this. Observe the atmosphere in which we have been trained. We have been brought up to being filled with the Spirit, to singing with one another in hymn, psalm, and spiritual song, as unto the Lord; we have been taught to give thanks always for all things, unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; then "submitting"—part of the psalm! It may be the closing note of the rolling,

the sonorous anthem. But we delight to tear these little sentences out of their place and to found theories upon them, so that some poor miserable preacher, of whom his mother might be ashamed, claims to be the head of the wife; a man who can hardly get out of bed in the morning; a man who has great difficulty in making bread enough to sustain his wife and family; a little, miserable, poorly-made toy of a man who is the head of the wife because he could not make himself the head of anything else! That is not Christian teaching. The two are one; they submit themselves one to the other. How to be first in the act of submission is the great problem, the happy, delightful enigma, which both the parties, if filled with the Spirit of Christ, can instantly and sufficiently answer and resolve.

You cannot lay down little rules upon any such matters of personal or household discipline. What, then, can we do? The Apostle has already told us: "Be filled with the Spirit." To rule without ruling, to lead without leading, to drive without cracking the whip, to be a man without being a fool—

that is only possible when we are filled with the Spirit, when we are breathing the vital atmosphere, when we are one with Christ. There is a sovereign principle which simplifies and sanctifies the whole action, redeeming it from servility, and lifting it up into a sacrament. What is that sovereign principle? Again and again it asserts itself in all these exhortations—"as unto the Lord," "as Christ," "even as the Lord of the Church." Christians, whether men or women, are never asked to do more than Christ did. That will solve everything. "Even as the Lord." Then, again, "as Christ," and again, "as unto the Lord." It is not some little domestic claim; it is a living Christian principle. Does the wife do nothing, even for the most successful of men? She makes the income quite as much as he does; she sustains him, inspires him, lifts the burden from his shoulder, takes him to see some new vision, drops into his life some new note of music. I would not have a penny that my wife did not share and could not spend. She made it. I, a poor creature easily depressed and turned out of the way, whose

only delight is that he can resign his position; and she, cheering, gladdening, inspiring, uplifting. To whom does the property belong? To her. When I told a certain half-grown old gentleman that my wife drew all the cheques without consulting me or troubling me about such documents, he said, "You must have great confidence in your wife." The wretch! "Confidence in your wife!" What a life without her! A nightmare—an awful, intolerable misery. But these things cannot be regulated by little laws and maxims. How, then, can they be regulated? I quote again the wholly sufficient answer, "Be filled with the Spirit, the Spirit of love." Love never thinks that anything has been given whilst anything has been withheld. Until, therefore, we are great in the Christian life, great in the conception of spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, foreordained by the discriminating and loving wisdom of God, settled, rooted, grounded in Christ, we are not fit to have a house, we are not fit to handle the delicate and difficult problem of life. But if the word of Christ be in us and dwell richly in us, there will be no

difficulty; there will be music, there will be rest; and we shall say, poor man or great man, "Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home."

> Verses 23–33: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

It is a marvellous and beautiful thing that even the Apostle Paul sometimes stood back and said, "I am not quite sure about this, but I think I have the mind of the Lord. I do not put too much stress upon what I am now

writing to you; I take up this position with some timidity, certainly with some caution. The subject is infinitely delicate; I will give you my own mind upon it. I do not speak by commandment, but I think I have the mind of the Lord. At all events, this is how the case strikes me." That is the teacher to believe in. Never believe in the man who knows everything; have great confidence in any teacher, lecturer, professor, preacher, who says, "Now at this point I am as weak as other men, but I will tell you how this most difficult subject presents itself to my mind at this moment." Paul has been using the greatest words: spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; the fellowship of the mystery; the riches of His glory. Oh, I am lost in these ineffable mysteries! Then he comes out from these inner sanctuaries, and says, "I have a doctrine that you can perhaps better understand and apply: wives, husbands, children, servants, masters, I have a word to say to you." Paul was the man to say it; he came from the right school. He came from the university of the divine communion. He had

companied long with the living God; and having stepped, so to say, forth out of the sanctuary that is covered with golden clouds, he said, "The application of all these marvellous visions with which my soul has been delighted is this: wives, husbands, children, servants, masters, this is the meaning of it all, so far as you are immediately concerned and related." We have already seen that we can only understand these things in the degree in which we have been happily affected by the atmosphere under which and within which they were spoken by this the leader and the chief of the Apostles. He has just, in our own hearing, so to say, called himself the least of the Apostles. Do not presume too much upon that. Paul could suddenly break away at many unexpected points, and startle those who thought they could take some liberties with him. Never take liberties with the Apostle Paul.

There is one grand principle running through all these instructions and exhortations about wives, husbands, children, servants, masters—and that great principle may be represented by these three words, "even as

Christ." Do not dwell upon the little circumstances, the transient occasions, the changeable conditions of the text, but get at the central and eternal principle — "even as Christ." Wife and husband, child and parent, master and servant, are only to be treated upon this great holy ground—other ground there is none. You can make a livelihood by inventing other programmes, but the fire will devour them, and the ashes will be nothing worth. "Even as Christ." "Even as Christ loved the church." Even as Christ loved the Father, so are those who are in Christ to love one another. No man can teach us that; we should be in the position of those who dispute with equals. There must be a sovereign voice in this matter. We shall know that voice when we hear it; it comes with authority, because it comes from eternity. Whenever the Apostle Paul, therefore, visits our families, he says, "Order everything even as Christ." No man or woman is expected to love more than Christ loved; to obey more than Christ obeyed; to stoop lower than He stooped when He took the towel and washed the feet of men who were unworthy. Why all these little

disputes about supremacy and priority and dignity and official elevation and the unutterable insanity of selfishness? The great philosophy of the whole scheme of the commonwealth is "even as Christ." That is the right bond of society. Other bond there is none to be relied upon; other bonds come and go like changing fashions in rings and colours. The eternal bond is "even as Christ."

He makes application of these words to the great subject of marriage. What poor notions many people have of the married life! They think that the priest marries them. Poor priest! many charges are laid at his door, but never lay the charge at any priest's door that he married you. He performed a ceremony, he discharged a legal duty, he had a fee for doing the least possible thing that could be done in the time; but marry you—no man can do that. You must redefine the word "marriage." It has become a market-place word—a word to jest at. It is a deep word, full of meaning, full of holy significance; it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. He marries all couples that are married.

I do not say all couples that are legally united, all couples that have a kind of legal lien upon one another; but all souls that are married the Lord has married. In that sense marriage is the sacrament of life, the great holy oath that binds souls into blessed unity. There are people, so amazingly small as hardly to be worth counting in the census, who sometimes want to know where they would like to be married. Hence the great religious ordinance has been degraded. They will be married here because it is near, there because it is fashionable, yonder because many people will be likely to see them, or at another place where they can be married for nothing. These are the fools that hurt the sacraments, that degrade the Church, that make the devil laugh! Marriage is an affair of the soul: two souls meeting without appointment; meeting in a way that creates the great surprises of life; meeting as Moses met the burning bush. He did not meet it by appointment; he met it, and wondered, and approached, and heard, and stood forth the leader of the hosts of the Lord. Man is perhaps more peculiar than any other biped; he

has a wonderful knack of making words that fit his non-religious moods. Do you know that it is a great thing not to be religious? Do you know that all the great men never go to church? Are you aware of that astounding fact? What poor creatures we must be to be in church! How do they treat this great mystery of marriage? They have scientific terms—and what is life without polysyllables? They speak of natural affinity. That does not sound very comforting. They speak of the survival of the fittest. An excellent doctrine for the fittest! They will not speak in Biblical terms of any great sacrament of life. The Apostle Paul spoke of these great sacraments, and he spoke of them in a language I prefer. I have the two phrases before me—"natural affinity, survival of the fittest"; and I have the Apostle's grander words, and I deliberately, solemnly, and gratefully adopt the language of the Apostle. He says, "Predestinated, elect before the foundation of the world"; and Christ said, "From the beginning, from the plasm of things, when the universe was less than a film in the purpose of God." From that point all these things

were settled. But man likes to think that he invented the words "natural affinity." Professor Huxley did most frankly acknowledge that he was the inventor of the word "agnosticism." Most of us have Greek enough to have made that word, and many of us have sense enough not to have done so. Do not dispute lightly the words of the Bible; they are the right words, so far as I can discover. I have gone through all the intellectual bazaars that were open to me, and I have looked upon the terms marked in plain figures, and I have never bought one of them—I have enough in the ancient museum of the Bible. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God"; predestinated, called, chosen—these are better words; there is more music in them; they appeal to something that is already in the heart. That is the solution of the problem of marriage; not of legal marriage, not of something that is done merely in a civil and political way: I am not using the word "marriage" in any of its lighter or more frivolous senses—I am speaking of marriage as expressing the predestined policy of God before the world

began. If you are married, you were married in eternity; if you are mismarried, it was not the Lord's doing, it was yourself, your lust, your covetousness, your selfishness, your narrow-sightedness. But if you are married in the real deep sense, you were married before the foundation of the world. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

Thus we revert to the great principle, the central, philosophical, and governing principle—"even as Christ." When we get into this region of things we shed off all little peddling questions about who is first and who is second, and who is superior and who is inferior. Let the dogs bark out that question if they care to do so. Paul was too wise to discuss it; and men and women called of God and bathed in the love of Christ have higher questions and have sublimer themes. Who is the greater? Both. Is not that bad grammar? Very bad grammar, but excellent truth. Who is to submit first? Both at the same time—"Submitting yourselves one to another": as we have just said, both doing the same

thing at the same time in the same spirit. Who shall do it first? Both! You must live these great mysteries; the pedagogue cannot explain them by his book, though it be illumined by a candle. You will understand by the simplest illustration what is meant by the climatic influence of atmosphere, even in the higher reaches of life. Let us put the case thus. Did this fruit grow in England? It is very excellent—is it of English culture? "No" is the immediate reply. Why not? The climate of England could not, at this season of the year, grow fruit of this succulence and richness; you never saw this bloom under England's cold grey skies. Were these flowers grown out-of-doors? No; they were grown in a special place under special conditions; they express a certain temperature of warmth, they are children of the warm air. Could they not have grown out-of-doors? No. Exactly so is it with the higher qualities and excellencies of the spiritual life. You cannot grow them in the open air, in the wintry time; they are grown in the garden of God. You understand the parable? The

finest excellencies of life cannot be grown outside the greatest Christian temple; they are right beautiful, and they are most luscious and cherishing, but they were never grown in coldness, in chilling rain, in freezing snow. It is even so with the great Christian virtues, fruits of the Spirit, as they are detailed in the great Epistle of Paul. They are in very deed fruits of the Spirit, flowers grown in the tropics of His love. There are persons who come to show you some poor half-withered weazened-looking apples, the best that can be grown in such soil at such season. Quite right; but do not let them pretend to be products of the tropics, do not let them attempt to put aside the great luscious fruits which represent summer at its best. That is the difference between your little socialities, and small programmes, and crippled attempts to do something for society under red banners and under the tuck of drums. If you would have right, justice, love, peace, unity, you must conduct your society on this principle, "even as Christ."

People who can see all this from the Covent

Garden point of view can never see it from a religious point of view. The worst of these crab-apple productions is that just by the time you have got to digest them in some poor degree, aided by a small army of doctors, the persons who grew the crabs come and look over your garden wall, and say, "Don't eat them, because they are not good for you!" Men do not stand to their own crab-apples, but they sell them to you to-morrow, and then tell you the day after that you ought not to have bought them. What is to be done? If society is to be saved, it can only be saved on the principle, "even as Christ." There you have righteousness, love, mercy, justice, pity, help, balm in Gilead, and a Physician that makes Gilead famous. You can sooner create a new astronomy than you can create a new socialism. Socialism is not left in our hands. Society is as truly the creation of God as is the solar system, and we have no right to interfere with it; interference is meddlesomeness, and meddlesomeness never comes to any good. You can touch the case at the point of accident, or at some lower level; here and there incidentally

you may do something that is not other than praiseworthy; but as to the solar system, it wants none of our patronage and none of our mechanism. And the socialism of God is as independent as His astronomy. I will tell you what I think perhaps we might first do, and after that do something else. I suggest that we should here and now as it were resolve ourselves into a committee to bring the tropics into England. I have a definite proposition to make, and that is that we endeavour to create the tropics by lighting more candles. I have not patented the idea, and you are welcome to it. We could make the place warmer if we lighted two more candles, or two hundred more candles. How does it feel now with regard to tropical warmth? Have we produced any effect upon the grass? does it look fatter and greener and stouter? Light two hundred more, and two thousand more. Now how do things look from a tropical point of view? Suppose we light a million more? Do candles make tropics? That is what people are trying to do without Christ, without the Book of God, without the sanctuary, by

programmes, new schemes, demonstrations, popular excitements, and promising men acres and cows by the thousand. And nothing comes of it. How is it to be done? "Even as Christ."

CHAPTER VI

Verses 1-9: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him."

"CHILDREN." What is the meaning of the word "children"? Is it possible that there can be nine different meanings to the word "child" in Holy Scripture? That is certainly so, and our poor English only enables us to render the

word by the one term, "child," and that solitary term, "child," we know next to nothing about. Hence the little carping criticism with which the Apostle is favoured by persons who ought to hold their tongues upon religious subjects, and possibly upon all other subjects. "Obey." We always associate some idea of discipline—perhaps also some idea of servility—with this word "obey." Is it possible that there are five different words rendered in the New Testament "obey"? that the five different words vary in grade and colour and emphasis? That is actually so as a matter of mere grammar, and yet we have but this poor little vessel named "obey" in which to carry away the water of life or the wine of God's love. And yet the Englishman is prone to think that there is only one wise tongue among all the nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues of the earth. "Obey": literally, "listen to." Attention is the first element in obedience; to listen well is the beginning of a good reply. But few men can listen; hence the expression, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Every

man has ears, but not necessarily to hear. We cannot too strongly impress upon our own minds the fact that very few men have cultivated the art and faculty—shall we say the science and wisdom?—of listening. Yet every man thinks he can hear. Hearing is only possible to the wise; hearing is not the same thing in any two instances; hearing means an attitude of the soul, a specific and high degree of attention, that the very last letter of a word may be heard. There must be no clipping, no shortening; we must hear the last, even dying, cadence of the musical counsel or exhortation. This is a great art, and few men have taken a superior degree in it, though every man thinks that he can hear; whereas he is mentally interrupting the speaker, and if he could audibly interrupt him he would. He never gives the speaker an opportunity of being heard absolutely; he replies before the sentence is finished. It is a beautiful little lesson, therefore, which the Apostle would send to the children: "Listen, listen, listen; and not until father or mother is really done attempt to say anything in reply,

and learn as soon as you can that the less you say in reply the better."

We have, therefore, as our great subject religion in the family. The question may be thrown into some such form as this: Here is a family; what would religion do—that is to say, the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ—if it were to be carried out in letter and in spirit within the four corners of the household? That is an interesting inquiry. The Apostle does not pick out any particular room or chamber or section of the house; he has the husband and the wife, and the parent and the child, and the servant and the master; and he has a religion that he thinks at least is adapted to every one of them, whatever the case may be. It is very like the grandeur of Christ's evangel; he has no little secrets for special persons, no small conceptions which only favourite intellects can receive. He says in all things, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." What is the Apostle doing to guarantee the spirit of this blessed injunction? When he comes to husband and wife, and parent and child,

and master and servant, he is in very deed preaching to every creature. Are there any more creatures in the world than those named or implied by the terms of the text? Probably there is not one. If, therefore, we can profitably study these injunctions, we may get a philosophy that will cover the training of the world, and that philosophy you can get nowhere else. I challenge the enemy; I challenge him by holding him in contempt. Let there be no misreading of these wonderful words. Every one of these injunctions could be spoiled by false emphasis. A man could so preach on this text as to take out of it all the light and all the music, and leave behind nothing but a mocking emptiness. It is so with many of the so-called commands and threatenings of the Scripture. There are no commands in any merely arbitrary and mechanical sense. And God never threatens, in our little, peevish, contemptible sense of threatening, holding a rod before a man or a dog, and saying, in effect, "I am stronger than you, and I will beat you if you do not comply with my wish, and do it instantaneously." We must

get rid of such criticism of divine words, or we shall never understand the holy and beautiful Book. When the Lord said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," He was not threatening Adam. "Threatening" is a word then unknown; there had been nothing of threatening. The words convey a gracious, tender warning; they express a yearning solicitude for the good of the creature: as who should say, "I warn you because I love you. This tree must be just where it is; why it must so be you will understand long ages hence. It will be in every man, in every moral and responsible creature. Do not touch that specified and peculiar tree, because if you do you will lose your manhood, you will forfeit your crown of dominion which I have just given to you over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the deeps of the sea." It is not a threatening, it is not a lordling playing tricks with some poor, ignorant, half-developed creature; it is brooding, yearning, redeeming love, as will be proved as the ages come and go and unload their gospels in the

sanctuaries of time. We could read "Children, obey your parents" in a pedagogue's tone, in a tone of alarm, and in a tone of affected and arbitrary or momentary superiority. We could so read it as a kindly, loving exhortation; and that it is not a threatening in the narrow sense of the word is proved by two facts—first, that Paul gives a reason for the exhortation, and, secondly, attaches a promise to its obedience.

What is the reason? "For this is right." He says it in a most noble tone; he wishes the young hearts to whom the admonition is addressed to build according to geometry, to have the square and the plomb and the compasses without which you cannot build anything. You may unload carts filled with bricks, but you build nothing until you enter the great temple of geometry and go to the altar of the square and the plomb and the compasses, and then say how you will handle the load of unrelated bricks, or stones, or other building material. It is as if the Apostle had said, "This is geometry—moral geometry, spiritual geometry; unless you build according to the action of the stars, you build

nothing, you are busy in idling, you are energetic and fussy in doing nothing or in savagely and insanely attempting the impossible. Every man must have a Bible. It may not be my Bible, my mother's Bible, the sweet book I live upon, the honeycomb sweeter than all other sweetness; yet every man, atheist as well as theist, must have a Bible, and a Bible of authority, if he would do anything really constructive and endurable in life. Here is the Euclid of the moral geometry—"for this is right": tested by the plomb line, tested by the square, tested by the compasses. Put one foot of the compasses on the centre, touch the circumference with the other, and say whether that circumference be a circle or only a rough polygon. You must have tests and standards and authorities, however much you may jeer at them or hold them in unreasoning contempt. Euclid in four words, Euclid with all his definitions and axioms and theorems and demonstrations in four words: do it *because it is right*. And right always ends in a benediction; nay, benediction is the very soul of right. No man can do right without sleeping

well, without ease of mind, without a growing sense of enlarging freedom and expanding and deepening fellowship with God and things eternal.

Then there is a promise as well as a reason—"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." That is the earliest notion of eternity. It was big enough for the time; we needed the patriarchs to show that there is nothing in mere duration of ages. It is mournful reading to read about the patriarchs and the men of high antiquity, because after they lived six hundred and fifty years they died, and after they had lived eight hundred and twenty and nine years they died; and after Methuselah came to his climacteric age he died. Death waits long for some people, but he always conquers in his own sphere: it is a measurable sphere, and a sphere we may sometimes mock at in relation to other and greater spheres, but time always conquers even Hercules and Methuselah. But time was so used algebraically and symbolically as to point to the unknown quantity called Immortality. That would have been too long a word for the very

first ages of the world—it would not have been understood at all; so the Lord must begin by promising that a man shall live twenty years, and two hundred years, and three hundred years, and until hundreds become almost a thousand. What is the Lord doing with all this variety of day and century and age? He is endeavouring by condescending methods to awaken the human mind into a dawning conception of the everlasting, immortality. There will arise a man in the after ages who will speak about an awakening trump, about an *anastasis*, a rising from the power of death and the grave, and a going forth in white robes to possess and enjoy eternity. In the meantime, here is a promise to be living upon. Thus God has schooled us and educated us; He has given a promise for the day, an assurance exactly needed for the passing necessity or the transient occasion. The little child is pleased to think that it may by good conduct and by strict regulation of diet live until it is a hundred years old. Dear little heart, sweet little soul, that is all it can at present take into its opening mind of the conception of the eternal. Ages

will come when we shall not reckon our growth by mere centuries, but by milleniums and æons endless. As a matter of fact, however, and exactly suited to the school period of life, it will be well with us in proportion as we listen to those who have the right and the ability to teach. It will go well with us if we act rightly. What is "well"? That is a little word, but it holds all the blessings—it means rest, and joy, and hope, and sweet content, and a mastery over difficulties, and a grand capacity for taking environments, so-called, and wringing their necks and throwing them into the ditch. It can only be well with a man when it is well with his soul, when he is right with God, when he listens, saying, day by day, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Then shall the day's work be hard indeed in many a case, but always will result in a good conscience and in a deep and well-deserved sleep.

What applies to the child applies also to husband and wife. We cannot order people to submit, and we cannot command people to love; we must therefore go elsewhere for the meaning of these words. In a very

narrow and superficial sense we may by sheer strength of muscle make some weaker man or woman submit or go under. That is not the meaning of the Apostle; that could not be the meaning of such a writer. We must go deeper. If you have overcome a nation by sheer force of military strength, you may make that nation, in a certain arbitrary sense, submit to you; but as soon as that nation has had time to grow a further muscle, it will take hold of your throat and make you submit. There is only one way of conquering men, women, children, nations, and that is by reason, by love, by righteousness, by reciprocity of manhood, the continual interchange of all that is best in thought, in imagination, in considerateness, in love, and in other Christlike and Godlike qualities. Do you suppose that you can make anybody obey you simply because you have the stronger arm? You may even report in the public prints that you have achieved a great victory. What by? By the sword? Never! There is only one victory, and that is the victory that is moral, spiritual, rational, filled with the

Spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of redeeming love. In that way you may kill your enemies, and kill them into friendship—kill them, so to say, by kindness and into love. That nation is only strong in the degree in which it is morally mighty; that household rule is only beautiful and sufficient and good in the degree in which nobody is conscious of living under, in a servile sense, anybody else. He leads best who never seems to lead. We want to see our leaders; and we want to see God, and we cannot see Him. He leads who does not appear to lead. Sight of him would lead to disobedience or to criticism, or to a vexatious mental turbulence. That is true leading that never shows the leader.

In all these cases of submission and obedience observe the rule is "in Christ, pleasing Christ."

Now with regard to the parents, understand that the parents are restrained: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Never make your children your enemies, and never rule them too much. A parent should never, if he can possibly help

it, make a fool of himself. He will be the best parent who is the companion of his children, who may sometimes, after five-and-twenty years of age, be almost mistaken for one of his own boys. They have lived together so joyously, happily, co-operatively, that kindly observation and criticism might sometimes inquire, Now what is the relation between these men, and if the one of them is the father, which is it? Many people have ruined their influence in their family by being much too big and much too conscious that there is no chair in the house big enough for their enthronement. But this cometh forth from the Lord of hosts—this science of the household life, this art and simplicity of artlessness and of wisdom. We can so live as to make obedience a delight and to make disobedience a positive pain to ourselves. There may be few only who know this, but it is known by some, that to do anything but the parental will would be a conscious self-contempt and self-punishment. The parental will has been proved so often to be "in the Lord," and "as Christ," and according to the very

Spirit of Christ, that to deny it or resist it would be an immediate and intolerable penalty. Blessed are they in whose houses there runs this spirit of mutual and reciprocal obedience and unity, saying, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh . . . Masters, forbear threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven"—emphatically, according to the language of Paul, knowing that your Master, as well as theirs, the Master being the same, is in heaven.

Now in all these relations there are one or two unchangeable points. First of all, the child can never be so old as the parent so long as they are both living. That is not a commonplace, nor is it a paradox; it is a philosophy. So long as they are both living they owe the same duty one to another, according to the degrees of experience and education through which they have both passed. The son may sometimes be wiser than the father: I have heard so; I do not always or necessarily believe it. The son believes it —no wonder; but if any man is so educated or schooled in academy or university as to

mock his own father's ignorance, he has been schooled in the wrong way, and his university may have conferred a degree upon him, but it has not made him a wise and honourable man. He is most educated and best educated who is most forbearing with the disadvantages under which his forefathers were doomed to live. They had no schools according to the modern definition of that term; they went to work when they were ten years old, or twelve, or fourteen; they had to gather what they could from dimly lighted night schools. But they were faithful to their opportunities, and they saved enough to put their sons to better schools, and even to universities; and it would be a sevenfold shame never to be forgiven if those sons, owing themselves to their fathers' self-denial, should turn upon their fathers and rend them for want of education.

As to the master and the servant, these relations can never be changed. There will always be masters, and there will always be servants. It is none of our doing—it is a law from the beginning; and if it be properly accepted and properly worked out, it is a

beneficent law. Relations may be ameliorated, may be modified, may be adapted to new circumstances, and every Christian would wish them so to be; but big and little we shall always have, great men and half-made men we shall probably have until the end of time. The great mischief is that a man should take a false view of work, of labour, and imagine that some other man has got the pre-eminence because he had good luck on his side. There is no good luck. I go back to the eternal counsel, and I find there the plan of life and the specification all drawn up; and if I could but accept what God has given me and make the most of it, and try honestly and legitimately to double it, I should be as happy as any lord or prince that ever graced the upper circles of society. You cannot make all men equal even by holding a demonstration in Hyde Park. You cannot make the little man a big man, even by doubling his wages. There are certain unchangeable points in human history, and these relations—parent, child, husband, wife, master, servant—must remain for ever. But we can greatly improve the

conditions, we can totally change the environment, and we can make men feel that it is no disgrace to be working. I could tell of a great man, who had taken certainly three or four of the highest degrees in the university, who the other day was working in the subways and almost drains of London, that he might qualify himself to go to the very top of his profession. He would learn nothing by mere hearsay; he would work his way right up, and know everything about it. No navvy should excel him in knowledge; he would do it. Whilst he was doing this, his kind, tender-hearted mother, who thinks it a pity for any of her children to be working in a subway or a drain, sent him two sovereigns for a Christmas present; and the son, with a gracious smile, sent it back again, and said he did not need it; he had all he wanted to be going on with, and he was finding great comfort in his work. If men would take things in the right spirit, they would find sunshine where nobody else could find it. Meanness of heart, discontentment of spirit, peevishness of soul, cannot find sunshine in midsummer's longest

day; but sweetness of soul and true obedience and right-minded manhood can find sunshine amid the snows of winter, amid the gloom of December. Hence we come back and back and back to these wonderful words we have heard before in these present readings: "as Christ . . . in Christ . . . as the Lord . . . in the Lord." That is the centre, and that is the explanation, and that is the music of it all.

This, then, is Christianity in the family. It has a good word for everybody. It begins with the husband and the wife. It puts them into their right relation, and then it goes up into the nursery, and talks to all the little children in baptized language and baptized smiles, and watches them until they are seven, eight, ten years of age, and then until they are five-and-twenty, and leaves them for the nonce, saying, "Now you are going to become husbands and wives yourselves." Then it goes into the kitchen, and into the stableyard, and into all the relations of life, and says, "Here is direction for you, here is sunshine, here is music." And when the question arises, "What is

sunshine?" and "Oh, sir, tell me what that music is?" the answer never changes: "In Christ, as Christ, in the Lord." The Apostle stands back in the temple of eternity, and gives out the law of development as men are able to bear it.

Verse 10: "Finally——"

"Finally," and then, to soften the cruel word, "my brethren," as if making brotherhood for the purpose of breaking it up and finding the sorest places in the heart. Please note the date of this discourse, then note the text, and then say if they be not appropriate one to the other. "Finally" is a word which has many meanings. It is like a diamond with many facets—little faces, shining, glinting, gleaming, lights of faces. Do not let us roughly and peremptorily, as it were, dismiss the word "finally." It fits the season well; there are not many words that could fit the hour more exquisitely, more pathetically, more poetically. Let us look at the meaning, the import of the word "finally."

First, it may be used in relation, as in this

case, to an argument, an expostulation, or an exhortation. The great magician and rhetorician has supplied all his arguments. He has supplied the heart with many an appeal; he has argued the case as a mighty man of intellect alone could argue it; he has presented it in the highest lights; he has shown how the argument develops a great decree and divine intent. Then he breaks away to an apparently subsidiary matter—entering the family, and giving exhortation to husband and wife, and parent and child, and master and servant. Then he is apparently weak; he hardly knows now how to bring the whole thing to a conclusion. The Apostle Paul often got himself into such verbal entanglement, but he always came out of it; and now, gathering his singing-robe around him, he says, "Finally, brethren." And, as if instantaneously, the higher light catches him, and he is away up to the highest level of his argument; and he addresses a soldierlike appeal and challenge to those who have been listening to his argument and his appeal. That is a good "finally"; at all events, it is a "finally"

not without merit. But it is not the real "finally," with sevenfold doom booming through its music. There is a grander "finally" somewhere. Yet we cannot altogether dismiss the pedant, the logician, the man of eloquence. He says in effect: The proposition is this; the argument I intend to establish is this; the illustrations with which I will light up the argument are these; and the personal applications which I intend to make are these; and I have spoken to each one of them as if he were the only person interested: and now, gathering up the whole thing into one grand appeal, it is this. And we say, "Plato, thou reasonest well. It must be so; else why?" It is, however, one thing to yield to an argument, and another to obey it; it is one thing to be intellectually convinced, and another to be morally persuaded; it is one thing to have the intellect thoroughly satisfied, as by chain-armour-like logic, and another for the conscience to rise and say, "I will do it." Hence our lost poetry, and lost sermons, and our lost consciences."

Then we may, secondly, take the word

"finally" as indicating a completion—something that was intended to be completed by the mind or by the hand, or in some way indicative of construction and purpose. You look at a statue, and you say, whilst your eyes are still on the wet clay, "Yes, that will do; that is very good: I need not return." The artist smiles, and says, "You have hardly begun yet; you must come back after a given time." And you return, and observe that the statue is proceeding, and proceeding satisfactorily, and you say, "This will be enough." And the artist says, "No; we now want the high lights, and the half lights, and the quarter lights." And you say, "Can you not dispense with these?" "Certainly not; if I am to speak from an artistic point of view, they would almost seem to be the most important part of the whole fabrication." "But they mean so little to me." "Yes, but they mean everything to the effigy. The question is, whether you are going to put yourself to a little more inconvenience, or whether you are going to destroy my reputation as a sculptor." Does the artist rest because he is tired? Certainly

not; that would be a mean idea. God did not rest because He was tired. God cannot be wearied, Omnipotence cannot be fatigued; yet God rested. Why does the artist cease? Because his work is done. He can do a thousand more pictures quite as beautiful, or statues quite as exquisite and complete; but the particular work in question is finished —*consummatum est.* And so I hear a great wondrous voice in the ages, the stronger because of its weakness, "It is finished." In that sense, you see, the word "finally" has a special application. We do not leave the world because we are tired of it; we do not die because we are utterly depleted and exhausted as to our imagination of possibility and as to our claim of ambition. We say, "We have hardly begun to live." But we die and pass on, because all that is possible in a given time and space has been done. "It is finished" is written upon our little fragment of work. The broken column in the winter cemetery is the dreariest of all pictures you can look upon, and yet so pathetic, suggestive, and in its way grand. What is all life but a broken column? What

is man in his ninetieth, his hundredth year, but a broken shaft—marble fine enough, but the brokenness of it is the poetry and the meaning and the divinity of purpose.

Then, thirdly, we may regard the word "finally" as indicating qualification. When you leave school, do you leave the world? You only leave one world to get into another and a higher. Every school has written upon its portal qualification, or equipment, or preparation. When we leave school it is to proceed into a larger school—schooldays are never done. There are some things we can only begin, we can never complete them except in an intermediate and almost superficial and even worthless sense. When the apprenticeship is done and the indentures are burned, is the work finished? does the apprentice say "Finally"? Only in an intermediate sense; he is going to be more an apprentice than ever, he is going to be a bigger man, a greater worker, a more qualified agent. Why those seven years under the sealing-wax? To get ready for the eighth year of manhood and virile energy. I see! Then apprenticeship does not end life? No,

apprenticeship but begins it. There are many people who think that when they join the Church, as the phrase is, all is over, Christian character is established and Christian intelligence is sphered out into a thing of admirable completeness and beauty. Away! it is not so! When you joined the Church, in the sense of becoming a communicant, you only began the real stress and often the real trouble. It was therefore but an intermediate "finally"; it was good-bye to the devil that it might be an eternal companionship with God. Do not imagine that Christian character is a completed act; never suppose that by one act you have done all things. We are not saved—we are being saved. It is a verb of constant action, a verb transitive, never losing but rather increasing its energy. We are undergoing a process; one day we shall be saved—oh, far-off, but glorious day! You are a young man and are serving what you term your articles. Are you a solicitor? No, I am being qualified to become a solicitor. Can you not qualify yourself by a given hour to-day? No, that is not within my power. Have you to slave on a few days or months

or a year or two longer? Yes, if you may call it slaving on; I have to attend, to serve, to pay attention, to acquire, and to prepare myself for a rather severe examination. And after that, what? After that, the bigger work, the fuller work; but without such preparatory arrangement and discipline I can never get into the rest of completed training. Why, it is the same with the training of the body. A man who is going into a real contest that has any meaning in it is not allowed to prescribe his own diet. That is very remarkable. Yes, but it is a fact. And yet in the Christian life a man undertakes to prescribe his own diet, and he takes it when he pleases, and lets it alone when he pleases, and he goes to church when he wants to go to church, and if he does not want to go to church he never looks near the place; and then he expects the minister to turn him out quite finished in education and in spiritual culture. He plays the fool in the preparation time, and then expects to come out top of the list and with all the honours in his pocket. This cannot be done; life is not to be successfully so played, so wrought, so developed.

My friends must think of me not as dead, but as promoted to a higher school, where I shall see my Lord and know as also I am known. There are intermediate "finallys," little, partial summings up, trifling good-byes, which we shall forget ere a century revolves. We measure time so badly and take magnitudes and quantities so absurdly that we shall be glad to burn all our little pocket-books by-and-by; for we have put down the big as little and the little as big, and the whole process has been a ludicrous miscalculation and disproportion. Observe, therefore, when we say "Finally," we may really be saying "Now, begin!" The finest epitaph I ever heard was in one line—"Here endeth the first lesson." There is nothing final in poetry, nothing final in spiritual imagination and contemplation. That a man should have his arms folded on his breast and be laid down in his mother clay, and should have written on the marble Bible above his bosom, "Here endeth the first lesson!" So, let us remember, there are intermediate "finallys," some little ruptures. They look awful at the time. The surgeon says, "That is an immense

wound." Relatively, it is immense; but in another relation it is nothing—not a blood-drop on a firmament. All the analogies are in favour of another life. I do not know a single analogy, which, fairly treated, points to death in the sense of extinction or annihilation. Why is the boy undergoing his education? With a view to profession—that is to say, he passes through the one world or life that he may enter the higher life or world that is to come. Why is this man sowing seed on the field, apparently throwing it away, scattering it in the air? What is the meaning of this lavish gift and this energetic idleness? Why so? Because this is the way into the harvest-world, and there is no other way. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." You cannot help it. You may be agnostics, and atheists, and non-theists, and secularists, and positivists, and any other number of little tomfooleries you please to elect as may gratify the immediate palate; but you cannot hurt or hinder the great law, that whatsoever a man soweth he has got to eat it—eat it!

What is true of individuals is true of

nations. A bitter truth, a bitter aloes that corrects some evil internal condition. What is this man or woman constantly going over the scales for? If some tune were played, I could bear it; but from morning till night, as it appears to my impatience, it is all one scale after another, over and over again. What is the meaning of it? You will know if you will follow the man or the woman to-night. You will observe the gathering-up of all these scales and practisings, and you will be thrilled by the issue. The greater the artist, the greater the student. When you hear the final music you will not begrudge the hours spent on the practice of the scales. So it is in every department of life. We think how easily this or that is done; we do not know the backlying process; we know nothing about the wakeful hours, the weary headaches, the trying and trying again and again. All these things are forgotten; but when we hear the final outcome we are filled with delight, and we foolishly imagine that the man or the woman could have done so by simply doing it on the spot, without

any preparation such as would mean blood-shedding, trial, and loss of nerve—yea, and some pain of a small Gethsemane.

So we have our intermediate finals, and we have a final that closes great experiences which we may carry with us into another world. Shall we know them there? Certainly; all the analogies are in favour of that. There is one "finally" that we cannot escape. Every one of us must give an account of himself to God. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. There is no discharge in that war; there is a bourn from which no traveller returns. Yet it seems that the little step between the staying and the going is so small that we might whisper across it. We do not require words of music, or tempests and roarings of thunder, because the little step only took place last night. He, she, cannot be far away by this time. May we not have one word of recognition, salutation? No; for this time it is final. But only for this time; there is another time. To-day has not only a to-night but a to-morrow. We must not so live as to miss the chance

of meeting again; we must not shame our plighted word; we must be faithful unto death. And we shall be none the worse because of our weakness. There is a time when weakness may be strength, and when the less we have to say for ourselves the more our Christ may have to say for us, to us. His look is light, His smile heaven!

> Verses 10–13: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

We have already delivered a discourse upon the word "Finally." The words "my brethren" somebody else has inserted, but the Apostle would not object to any one putting in such words, for they occur as to their spirit in many places. The man who said to the Philippians "I have you in my heart" would not object to any scribe interpolating the words "my brethren" in such a connection as is now before us.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong." Who says so? Who has any right to say so? And what does "strong" mean? There are some preachers who have no right to say "Be strong." A sermon upon "Be strong in the Lord" may be a most wounding, offensive, and unjustifiable discourse. "Be strong" is a text that ought not to be taken up by every one; only the chief of musicians has any title to play on such a harp. But we who do not belong to the higher order of that class may preach upon the holy, gentle words according to a measure which I will presently specify. We cannot always hear the chief of the musicians; sometimes even his harp is out of tune, though we know he has a right to this music, for he has lived it. No strong man, a man whose strength has never failed, should dare to speak to the weak. He has no right in that sanctuary; he is disqualified, and he must be made to feel it. Who is it that speaks this word to the Ephesians, "Be strong"? He calls himself "the man of the chain"; that is his literal style and title. In the hearing of the clang of that chain

he says to those who are sore pressed, "Be strong." What a thunderous power there is in the exhortation of such a man! There are many who sit in drawing-rooms and read the news from the war, and comment upon it languidly immediately before rising to approach the tea-table. What a mockery! What do they know about war? But if a man, all scars, carrying the medal of wounds, should say to those who are fighting, "I am sorry I am not with you, for my day is past—but be strong," he would compel all wise men to listen. There is nothing so offensive as preaching when the preacher knows nothing about the marrow and core and innermost blood of the subject. I will not listen to him; he is no priest of God. He may have a regulation utterance, and pronounce it at a regulation time, but I shall not be there, God helping me. But I will listen to my father-brother who says, "I have been just where you are; I have felt every pang, every smart of the inconceivable agony, and by that right, and the experience which has come out of it, I would venture to say to you in the day of your trouble,

'Be strong in the Lord.'" That whisper will find my heart. He knows what he is talking about. He does not deal in consolation as a merchantman, selling it at so much per ounce or so much per yard; he knows the whole mystery, and speaks out of the sanctuary of his soul, and the Lord doth clothe his words with power, and make him a kind of sub-redeemer to me in my darkness and helplessness.

The rich cannot comfort the poor. The men who were born rich and have never had to do one single hand's work for themselves cannot talk to the poor. They may have speeches ending in still more verbose resolutions; but wealth can never talk to poverty. Poverty can talk the mother tongue of poverty. There may be rich men who do talk to the poor, and talk wisely, and with the fullest of good intentions and with the most unsuspected good faith; but they do not know the lingo. You can tell the foreigner when he speaks even grammatical English. Are we, then, questioning the good faith and tender sympathy of those men? Far from it. We honour them and love them,

but they cannot do it. They would if they could; but he who has not been in the furnace does not know the fire, and he whose cupboard has always been full does not know what it is to cut the crust so that it will cover two meals.

The free man cannot talk to the slave. He has great periods of a rhetorical squash kind, big as the great periods uttered by the great Irishman Curran, one of the most eloquent tongues that has wagged within the century or the century and a half. But it is not talking to the slave. The slave says in effect, when Curran is done, "What is the meaning of it all?" and if Curran should answer, "I am sympathising with the slave—with you in your slavery," the slave would smile as only a slave can smile. It cannot be done. There are transcendental impossibilities—things we cannot struggle up to, because we lack the mystery and the spiritual insight and ineffable music which alone can work the miracle of sympathy. Do we, then, question the sincerity of the sympathy? By no means—it is utterly sincere in many cases; but unless you have been in Egypt you do

not know what it is to make bricks without straw. Some poor old neighbour could come in and talk—not quite pure and grammatical English, but the sort of English that the heart knows and can interpret; and poor old Grief, lifting its brown apron and drying the tears from the eyes, would say, "Thank you—you have done me good." So we are face to face with a man who knows the case, who knows what strength is and what weakness is, and who is in a kind of humiliation at the very moment of this speech; and, lifting up his chained hand, he says to those who are in actual and possible danger, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." He had a right to say so; the world will always listen to such a counsellor.

Be strong "in the Lord." That may be described as a qualifying term. The exhortation is not "Be strong," but "Be strong in the Lord"—in the strength higher than your own, in the strength out of which all true strength is originally derived. Have a sanctuary into which you can flee; make no gingham umbrella of some theory, and invention, and speculation of your own indigestion,

but flee from the wrath! Man makes houses, God makes rocks. The exhortation means, being turned into more words: "Connect yourselves with the Infinite; live, and move, and have your being in God. Have a great temple of truth, a grand sanctuary of insight and companionship with the Eternal, and let nothing come between your souls and daily communion with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with an innumerable company of angels; and remember that even they, the sentries, derive their energy from Him who 'fainteth not, neither is weary.'" So many people do not know the meaning of such words; they live in events. That is how most Christians are practical atheists. They think they are full of faith, when they are only reading anecdotes and waiting for the next edition to come out to see what the people on the other side have done. The people on the other side have done nothing. Why fret and fume about these events? I am so far akin to this great Apostle as to my soul's aspirations and desires that I admire intensely the way in which he treated events. We make much of them; we sell

them; and who would deprive a man of his livelihood even if he has been tempted to develop a telegram and invent news from the front? Where is the front? Who leads? I have watched the Apostle for a lifetime, and the way in which that man gathers events together and wrings their necks off is simply delightful. But we publish a large placard at the door that we will lecture on the great event of the week. Ah me! it hurts the Cross; it writes Ichabod on the altar and puts out the altar flame. But we call such preaching living up to the times. This man is a remarkable man for addressing himself to the hour. Poor creature! I wish the hour were big enough to drown him, in his official capacity. How did the Apostle treat events that we think so serious and so important? Why, he treated them like this: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay." Ay, shall death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, or any other creature? —all events in one catalogue; and he said, "Nay, in all these things we are more than

conquerors through Him that loved us." When we have a city of the mind we shall have rest. When we live, and move, and have our being in God we shall not be the subjects of panic, or the victims of hot fever; we shall be perfectly quiet—in quietness and confidence we shall possess our souls. Oh that we had hearkened unto His voice and obeyed His commandments! for then had our peace flowed like a river, and our righteousness had been as the waves of the sea.

What shall we do in all the tragedy of life? "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God." What is the second word? You are quite right; you have hit upon the pulse-word which so many of us are apt to overlook: "Wherefore take." Not "make." There is all the difference in the world in this connection between "taking" armour and "making" it. We have nothing to do with making armour of this kind which is intended for the defence and security of the soul. But this would dry up many sources and streams of invention and theory and speculation? It would, certainly. The

Church has had so little to do that it has taken to image-making on a large scale. One man has a theory about the Atonement, and another has a theory about the future life; and he has changed that theory twice, and modified it three times, and published it, with footnotes and with an appendix! What am I to make of this theory or invention? He says, "I—I would not say so now." I cannot rest upon the word which may be changed at any moment; so I build upon what I believe to be the word of the living God, the logosity of the universe, the inbreathing, outbreathing mystery of the divine oath. Do not go to the armour-maker to see what is good for your defence when the enemy, in all his manifold energy, is heavy upon you; everything has been provided in the Word of God. Again and again I would say, as I have said, "If you want a book to prove that the Bible is sufficient, there is only one book can do it, and that book is the Bible itself." And I would say to many an inquirer, "Have you read the Bible?" "Of course!" No, not "of course." It takes a

man all his seventy years to read the Bible; and when he is fourscore, and there is but strength, labour, and sorrow, he has not begun to read the Bible as one day he will read the spiritual revelation in spiritual places. Everything is in the Word of God: all truth, all beauty, all music, all love; for God is in the Zion of His Word, and it cannot be shaken. If people knew the Bible as they know the newspaper, what another world it would be! Have you read the Bible this morning? I thank you for your silence—it is eloquent. We should read it every morning. I believe we do break our fast every morning. We feed the body, and say to the soul, "Wait! when I have a convenient season I will call for thee and give thee some inexpensive and innutritious food."

What a wonderful view of the life of Christian experience is given in these words! which we shall utterly miss if we begin to explain. It is very neat and natty if we begin to explain armour, and loins girt about with truth, and breastplate, and feet, and shield, and helmet, and sword. That

is not to expound the passage at all. What is God's view of human life so far as we can make out from this description and from this offer of grace? First of all, God knows that human life is a fight. It is something for God to tell us that He knows all about the battle. A God afar off could lecture us about the battle, and might deliver to us a course of lectures about it; but they would do us no good. But the Lord says to us, through the medium of His Son and through the ministry of His Apostles, "Souls of mine, life is a tragedy, a sorrow, a conflict, a daily agony; I know every pulse of it." We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but in all points He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin. It is something to believe that God knows everything we suffer. What a fight it is! The devil is so strong, so wakeful, so cruel. He has nearly torn me to pieces; he is a terrible opponent. He is not a metaphysical antagonist—he is a real and tremendous foe, and he has said to me many a time, "Poor man! shut up that old book

of yours which you call the Bible: it is old and obsolete, and quite behind the march of the ages." Many a time he has said to me in the last twelve months, "Get off your knees, you fool! and I will do what I can for you. As for Him, nameless, who lives above the air, He cares nothing for you, and you may dig seven more graves and He will scorn them all; rise!" Again and again he has said to me and to you, "There is no utility in so-called prayer; it does nothing for you, it is but wasted breath. Do not imagine that there is anything above you but the infinite azure; and there is certainly no throne, no personality, no tender, condescending, redeeming Providence. Carry out your own will to the best of your power, and when it is your turn to die breathe your last; come!" And sometimes I have almost gone. But, blessed be God, not having gone, I preach the better after it all, with a deeper soul, a holier truth, a tenderer appeal; having been all but scorched by hell, I have come by that way nearer heaven. By whatever right this suffering may have entitled me to speak,

I venture to say, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." To-morrow I shall be one year's march nearer her and the Home. But the devil has relaxed nothing in severity, in cruelty, in opposition; he is the devil still.

And then, not only does God know that it is a fight, but He provides for every aspect of it. He knows that we shall require a helmet, and a sword, and a shield, and that we shall require preparation for our feet, and all manner of defences; and He says, "Poor soul! they are all here, all of them; you are welcome to them, I made them for you—not for angels, but for men." It is something to know that the Lord has made provision for every moment of our time, for every aspect of our struggle, for every mutation of our fortunes. The moment we realise that, we are young, strong, triumphant.

I judge, thirdly, from this delineation that the Lord knows the whole policy of the enemy. He calls part of that policy by the name "wiles"—little tricks and devices, pits dug in unsuspected places. He knows

what it is, does this wily enemy, to make us stumble in our speech. He has a wonderful power in the clouds, he bewilders and confuses the poor struggling mind—and the Lord knows every trick of the devil. When I realise that, I say, "It will be well with me in this case also." The enemy stopped my prayer yester morning, but I got it back in the evening; the Lord was more than the enemy. My soul's opponent endeavoured to tempt me to commit myself to false principles and hazardous issues, and just whilst I was thinking whether on the whole it might not be better just to give way in this instance, the Lord swept the devil and his tricks out of my road, and I came to church, the sanctuary, and the altar, and it was well with me. And it will be well with you, suffering brother. You have your difficulties at home, in your business, in your church, and principally in your own heart. Be strong in the Lord; never try to stop the inrushing stream of fire which shoots from the volcano of hell with the last tract on secularism, socialism, agnosticism, and the various other little inventions of irresponsible minds. Understand

that you are now hearing a man speak who has been through the whole case, who has suffered, so far as man may have suffered on this earth, the torments of the lost, and who has had to fight the enemy at midnight, and who found out soon that he could not fight that enemy with straws, but only with the steel of Heaven, the panoply of eternity. The Lord knows, therefore, what we are doing. He says in the first instance, "Withstand"—be obstinate, do your very best, uttermost, that, having done all, you may get away from "withstand" into "withstand" without the "with"—and having done all may stand. We owe everything, under God, to the men who have followed that policy. A great martyr said to his brother when they were going to the stake, "My brother, this day we shall light a fire in England that will never be extinguished." So they went as it were hand in hand and heart linked with heart to light a fire, and it burns to-day; and I ask those of you who are in sympathy with such spiritual heroism to see to it that that fire never goes out. Do not be little creatures, miserable, paltering debaters about whether

this should be a preposition or that should be an adverb, or whether we should stand to the east or stand to the west or fly to the north. Do not talk about these things, but light a fire for God that shall never go out. Young men of England! I ask you to be strong.

No man could have invented this expression. It brings with it some sign and token of its divine origin. The most of things that are in the Scriptures are things that never would have occurred to the mind of man. Hence I stand by the old argument that the Bible is a book which no man could have written if he would, or would have written if he could. The uniqueness is part of the argument. "The whole armour of God." Is there any mere poetry in the word "whole"? Is it employed or introduced in order to perfect a rhetorical climax? or is there great weight of meaning in the word "whole"? Is it the emphatic word in the exhortation? or are all the words on one high level?—the monotony not of weakness or weariness, but of completeness. We must revert to our own spiritual experience if we

would receive a sufficing answer to these inquiries. Could we do without the word "whole"? What does the word "whole" stand for in this connection? It stands for completeness. There must not be one piece of the panoply overlooked, nor must the places and arrangements of the armour be for a moment changed or otherwise related. The provision of the divine grace is complete; we are armed from the head to the foot, there is no unprovided place or spot in all this divine clothing with spiritual steel. But is there any meaning in the word "whole"? Yes, there is great meaning in that word. Consider what the exhortation would be without the word "whole," complete, entire. It would be a different command or exhortation; the military tone would be taken out of it. It would sink into a very poor admonition. There is a kind of gentle severity in the very language, and specially in that one word. "Whole armour." Consider what it would be if we missed any one of the pieces. A man is panoplied all over except the helmet. Then he is doomed, no matter how muscular he may be, how alert,

how determined. Suppose a man is panoplied all over except the shield. He is lost, no matter what his sword may be, or his helmet of brass; if he has no shield, his heart is exposed. Suppose a man is armed all over except the sword. The foe mocks him, asks him to produce his sword of straw, laughs at him. Does the foe deride him simply because he is wanting in one solitary piece of armour? That is precisely what the foe does. The armour is not to be looked upon as consisting of pieces; although it is given in detail, it is only given in detail in order to mark the solidity of the unity of the panoply. The armour is only enumerated that it may be totalled, brought to one grand fitness.

Many persons are armed in places. If nine points out of ten are attended to, these people suppose that they are very well provided for; but they are not. You have shut up all your castle, every window, every door, except the postern gate—the little gate behind, the small door that a small burglar may pass through. All that is wanted is not an army of burglars, but one little

child-burglar that can creep through an unguarded pane of glass. Enough! the castle is in the hands of the thief. How noticeable it is that people are very fond of pet graces and favourite virtues, and how they dangle these before the eyes of those poor creatures who are not similarly created or provided for at those special points. It is heart-sickening, it must hurt the Saviour! How the mean creature who does not thirst for strong drink mocks the poor creature who, under the pressure of three generations, burns to drink the fire-fluid! The Pharisee holds himself erect, and says in the audience of the people, "I do not need stimulants; I have no craving for strong drink! Other people can surely do as well as I can." Hold thy tongue, thou servant of the pit! Thine own brother mayhap may have an unquenchable fire in his throat, for which he is not so broadly responsible as may be supposed at first sight. The generations come up again; we reap old harvests. Our forefathers are living in us; they heat the blood; they should be twice damned. "The evil that men do lives after them." So it is through

the whole gamut of human experience and spiritual utterance; we are apt to be proud of the particular part of armour which we have, and to torment other people because they are not equally strong at the same points, though they may be stronger at other points in the clothing of the divine panoply. Let us be merciful, let us be tenderly gracious; the people who are more easily tempted than we are know it, mourn it, cry over it in unknown places and in darkened hours—too well they know their weakness and their shame. Do not let us who are not tempted in such directions hold ourselves up as stupendous models of behaviour in some other direction. A man may not be drunk, but his soul may be steeped in covetousness, which is worse than drunkenness. A man may not be led away by his passions, but he may be greedy, selfish, self-considering, proud—and pride is worse than any sin that stalks about the city in the night-time. We condemn sin at wrong points, or we exaggerate some sins and practise others. Hence the beauty, the force, the necessity, of the expression or

commandment, "Put on the whole armour." Every inch of it, be equally strong at every point; ay, and it will take thee all thy time to panoply thyself in the steel of God. The Christian life is a hard life; when it is otherwise it is not the life Christian. Jesus Christ laid down this condition at the very first. He said, "The badge of all our tribe is a Cross; every man must bear His own cross, every man must carry the cross at the heavy end. Except a man carry his cross daily he cannot be My disciple. He may have some kind of unpractical admiration of Me, he may even say very fine and attractive things about Me; but he knows nothing about My salvation—that salvation represents a garden of agony, a cross of shame, a brand of dishonour in the eyes of the world." Who, then, can be saved? That is no question for us; that is not our inquiry. When we do put it, in our heat and ignorance, Jesus says, "Strive ye to enter in at the strait gate." Do not inquire how many people can get in at the strait gate and walk along the narrow road, but strive ye, every one of you, as if ye were the only

creature in the universe to enter and to walk along and to fight the devil day by day. What wonder that the Christian religion is not popular, and that Jesus Christ is at the foot of the list of the religions of the world? Herein is that saying true, "He that is first shall be last, and he that is last shall be first." The statistical tables will be reversed, and are being reversed with every process of the sun.

If we look at this panoplied man, we shall find that he is a living parable. Many written parables have fascinated our imagination and delighted our hearts, and even comforted our hearts in times of sore distress; but here is an incarnate parable, a living picture of the complete man. Everything upon the Christian man has a meaning. We know what this is in ecclesiastical attire. It is foolish to mock such attire and to ignore its possible and even holy symbolism. You inquire the meaning of this part of the apparel, and the explanation is given to you. It is symbolic. It is nothing in itself; and if it were taken away from the rest of the attire, what would it be but a piece of cloth,

or linen, or silken ribbon, or dumb drapery? But set in its place, interpreted by the truly ecclesiastical genius, it has a meaning, and a meaning not to be despised; but if the meaning be exaggerated or misplaced, then it will become an offence. The captain of a ship will tell you, as I have heard him say, "Every passenger who comes near me when I am standing looking over the sea says, 'What is the meaning of this chain, captain?' 'What is the meaning of this arrangement for turning the machinery?'" The captain may well get wearied and tired of answering such questions, for they occur day by day, and on every voyage—on the voyage out and on the voyage in; the same ignorance asks the same questions, and the same petulance gives the same keen and almost resentful or uncivil replies. Carry the idea up to its highest levels and meanings, and the signification is this: that everything that is provided for the Christian's attire or accoutrement is symbolical, is a sign, so that the man thoroughly equipped for the fight is a living parable read by well-trained eyes. The parables flush with beauty; listen to them as

a voice, they tremble with ineffable music. We are much too material in our construction of things. Of course we have signed a very serious article of religious confession against materialism; and having signed the clause condemning materialism, we go out and practise it. So many people get rid of things by signing them away. Many persons would be very religious if their signature could be accepted as a sacrifice. That is where the point of agony occurs. If by signing any number of credenda we could be enrolled as Christians, we would sign at once; we are always prepared to sign, and we are exceedingly hard upon the man who will not attach his signature to the same credenda. But signing is not crucifixion, and "except a man take up his cross"—not write his name—"he cannot be My disciple." Christianity is known by its hands and its side; no wound-prints there must mean no Christ in the heart. Of course this doctrine will empty the churches; praised be God, it will drive people away who ought never to have been there. But if some remain, they will be of the real quality, and he real quality is always in the majority; not

in a majority numerically, but in a majority spiritually energetic, influential, and sovereign.

It is wonderful in reading over this panoply to discover how much of it is meant for defensive purposes. It is not all meant for aggression. Christianity is both aggressive and defensive. It is astonishing, I repeat, how much of the Christian armour is for purposes defensive. The helmet does not fight, it protects; the shield does not aggress, it secures, defends, protects the very heart of the warrior. We need a great deal of defensive armour. The devil is wily. If there is one little heel spot missed in the Christian Achilles, that little vulnerable heel will be found out and some great assault will be made upon it—mayhap the injection of some deadly poison; and injections are not accompanied with noise or with an uproar that is supposed to betoken heroism and angry strife; injection may be silent. The morphia is inserted with hardly any sense of pain; the digitalis makes no noise when it gets into the life and helps the poor labouring breath. So there are many noiseless

temptations, there are many assaults that are not suspected; and therefore this saying is true, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch; resist the devil, and he will flee from you." But to be called to all this arming and watching and fighting and agonising expectancy—is this the way to life eternal? Yes, and other way there is none.

It is very noticeable that a great deal of this combat is what may be called hand-to-hand strife. It is not a discharge of ball and other missile over a space of miles; it is wrestling. Two men do not wrestle when they are standing five miles apart, nor a mile apart, nor a yard apart. It is when they are grappling, one with the other, seeking for the tightest place, watching every movement of the antagonist, anticipating and discounting it; the uplifting that there may be the downcasting. Sometimes the Christian warfare is just as hand-to-hand and arm-to-arm as this. Jacob wrestled; we speak and sing of wrestling Jacob. The record says, "Now there wrestled with him," and the wrestlers were so near to one another that the one touched the thigh of the other, and it shrank, and the

shrunken muscle abides there till this day to tell what angel tussles there have been in the dark nights of spiritual experience.

It is not enough to watch the agonies which other men undergo. We cannot always follow even our own brother into the dark Gethsemane. Every man must fight his own battle. We can help him up to a given point. It is the same with what men call grizzly, gruesome, cruel death. You can accompany a sufferer it may be in some cases up to the very last half-hour, or the last fifteen minutes, or the last five minutes; but he must go the rest alone. No two souls ever go together within a certain compass of time. It may be shorter, it may be longer, but there is a period in which the whole action becomes solitary; there is no discharge in that war. There is, apart from Christian sympathy and succour, but one relief I have ever found, and that relief is this—that I too must go alone; that is a relief. How easy to die! how hard to live! How delightful to breathe the last breath away! how terrible to turn from the chamber in which the victory has been won, and to go

out into some other room desolate with unutterable misery! And as in the hour and article of death there is this hand-to-hand wrestling with the great foe, so all through life there are days when nobody can be with us, hours when we are most social when we are most lonesome, strange grey times when our dearest surviving friend would hurt us by the very breath that is balmy with blessing. So we find in this great combat the lonely hour, the sacred strife, the contest that has no help given to it except from God; and God is most when we need Him most.

Is this armour all to be turned against the enemy? No; it is to be turned, so to say, but to say it with tenderest reverence, sometimes against God. How so? The proof is here: Having equipped yourselves, then follows the command or exhortation, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Does the Lord make an armoury that can be employed against Himself? Yes, in a certain sense; but that sense must be very carefully and even tenderly

distinguished and discriminated. The action is this: "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." And God, having armed the men, says, "Now come and take My kingdom." God is willing to be overthrown. The angel was willing that Jacob should throw him, as it were, in some great struggle. This is part of the condescension of the divine mercy. Sometimes a father wants even baby to deal some heavy blow of tenderness upon him; he means to yield only by force in a certain construction of that term. And God says, "Now that I have given you the whole armour, the entire panoply, now come and let us fight, and you shall win; you shall overthrow Me in the agony of prayer." Do not go to God to fight Him in your own strength and in your own panoply, and say, "Now I have made ample preparation for taking the fort of Heaven." No man can ever take the celestial fort; it must be surrendered by God in answer to prayer. He waits to be gracious, He waits for you to take it. He says, "Come and prove the armour with which I have clothed you." "Prove Me now herewith,

saith the Lord, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, river upon river, until you are not able to receive it." He clothes us with armour that we may, so to say, violate His very presence. He waits to be violated. He watches the whole movement. He loves His children. He loves them to win in the great contention.